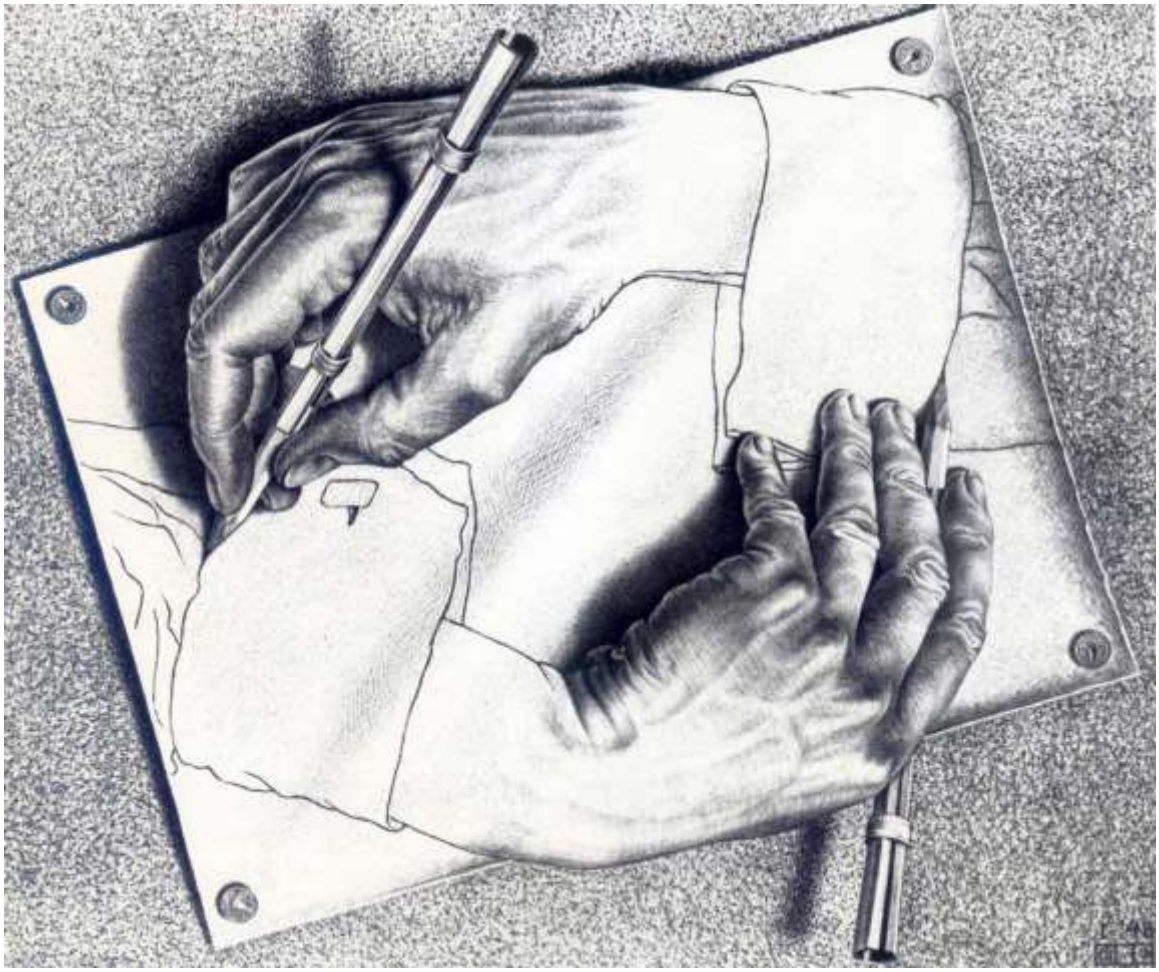
Pen & Pencil Magazine



Volume Nineteen: Winter 2025

Volume Nineteen: Pen & Pencil Magazine

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Obelisk Press

Vancouver, BC, Canada

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Cover picture: Escher, Two Hands

If you have a submission for the **Pen & Pencil Magazine** feel free to contact the Editor in Chief at

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A Dare question might be 'I dare you to take off your bra.' It's a Dare … so the person does not have to do it if they don't want to.

A Truth question might be 'where and when did you lose your virginity (notice I did not ask with whom …). It's a Truth question so the player may not wish to answer the question.

The Game of Truth or Dare,
A Bachelorette Party Game

Pen & Pencil Welcomes Submissions

Obelisk Press of Vancouver is pleased to publish the Nineteenth edition of ***Pen & Pencil Magazine*** which serves to feature the work of aspiring writers.

Pen & Pencil Magazine welcomes submissions on a quarterly basis.

The ***Pen & Pencil Magazine*** board is comprised of the unpaid volunteers:

Please feel free to send your short story, prose, poetry and artwork submissions to the Editor in Chief at

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There is no fee to submit. There is no writer's fee provided by the journal for those who submit. The publishing rights remain with the writer.

New Prose

Did Nicolas Poussin Paint the St. Petersburg Mona Lisa?

by Patrick Bruskiewich

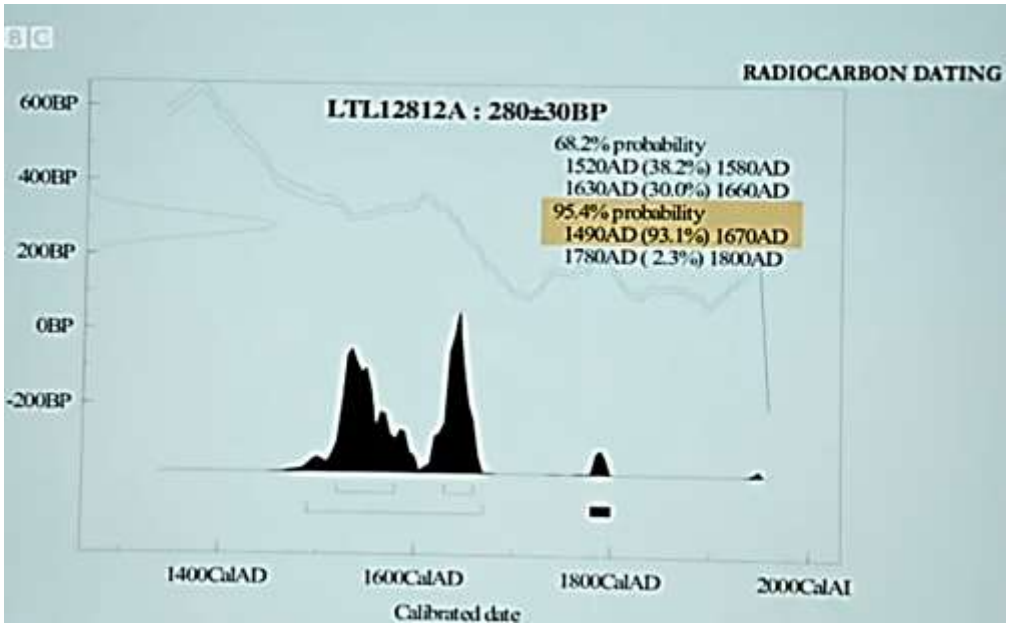
Recently I watched a BBC Documentary titled *Secrets of the Mona Lisa*. In this documentary there are a number of well presented statements about Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting at the Louvre, known in English as *The Mona Lisa*, and in Italian or in French as *La Gioconda*. There were other *Mona Lisa* paintings mentioned as well.

In this film several other versions of the painting are presented including one that now hangs in the Hermitage Museum and is known as the *St. Petersburg Mona Lisa*.

St. Petersberg Mona Lisa, Hermitage

As presented in the BBC Documentary the *St. Petersburg Mona Lisa* was not painting around 1500 in Italy, but was in fact painting more than a century later in perhaps France. The *St. Petersburg Mona Lisa* painting is done on canvas. Da Vinci rarely used canvas when he painted, preferring to paint on wood.

The BBC documentary presents evidence about the carbon dating of the canvas to *t. Petersburg Mona Lisa* painting which is intriguing in that it has a complex distribution, that spans a period from 1490 to 1670.



In context da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* at the Louvre may have been painted over an extended period starting in 1503 and perhaps ending in 1517.

In the carbon dating of the *St. Petersburg Mona Lisa* there is less than a 2 % chance that the canvas to this painting dates from 1503 or before, and less than a 5 % chance the canvas predates 1520.

Leonardo da Vinci died on May 2, 1519. The 95% percentile is from later than 1520. For the canvas used in the *St. Petersburg Mona Lisa* to date after da Vinci's death clearly means that someone else produced this painting.

There is an additional clue provided by means of a chemical assay of the pigments found in the *St. Petersburg Mona Lisa*. A chemical assay of the primary layer shows that a pigment based on barium sulphate was used in this painting. Pigments based on barium sulphate became available for artists in Paris in the years ranging from 1620 to 1680. By 1620 Leonardo had been dead for more than a century.

Another interesting clue is that Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting at the Louvre was first put into public view in 1789. After being part of the private French royal collection for centuries since it was acquired by Francis I of France shortly after Da Vinci's death in 1519, the painting was 'nationalized' during the French Revolution.

For someone to have made a faithful reproduction of da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* before 1789 during the period 1620 to 1680 means they would have had to have access to the original, which was then in the French royal collection.

If we are now considering a period that spans 1620 to 1680, and requires access to the French royal collection during this period, we would have to narrow the search to accomplished portrait painters who might have been in Paris during that period.

One such portrait painter is Nicolas Poussin. When you undertake a due diligence of Nicolas Poussin you find he was in Paris during two periods of his life, initially from approximately 1612 to 1623, where he was starting out as a painter and was inexperienced, and later from December 1640 to late 1642, when he served as First Painter to the King.

Self-Portrait, Nicolas Poussin, Louvre Paris

Poussin was summed to Paris from Rome by Cardinal Richelieu and by the French King Louis XIII. He returned to Paris in December 1640 to work on major projects, including decorating the Louvre's Grand Gallery. It is said that Poussin left Paris due to purported court intrigue, permanently returning to Rome in 1642.

Poussin's style in both portraiture and landscapes are very reminiscent of the style of Leonardo da Vinci. So was Poussin's palette. It is plausible that Poussin painted the *St. Petersburg Mona Lisa* in the short two years he was in Paris, either for himself or for a wealthy patron.

The *St. Petersburg Mona Lisa* has dimensions that are in the ratio of 3 to 4. It is interesting to note that Poussin's self-portrait from 1650 which is to be found hanging in the Louvre, also has a dimensions in the ratio of 3 to 4, or 0.75

Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* has never been trimmed and has a ratio of 0.688.

It is plausible that Nicolas Poussin painted the *St. Petersburg Mona Lisa* during his working visit to Paris from 1640 to 1642.

{first published at ***Medium***, 2026}

Is the Prado Mona Lisa, the First Mona Lisa?

by Patrick Bruskiewich

{Full title: Is the Prado Mona Lisa, the First Mona Lisa and the Louvre Mona Lisa the second painting?}

I have studied Leonardo Da Vinci and his creative praxis for more than five decades. It is well understood that Leonardo Da Vinci was a humanist, an artist and a scientist.

Recently I watched a BBC Documentary titled *Secrets of the Mona Lisa*. In this documentary there are a number of well presented statements about Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting at the Louvre, known in English as *The Mona Lisa*, and in Italian or in French as *La Gioconda*. There were other *Mona Lisa* paintings mentioned as well.

One of the great and endearing questions from art history is that of the 'two Mona Lisa.'

If we are to accept Raphael's description of the first Mona Lisa, what historians have designated as *La Gioconda*, then we should expect the painting to have a number of attributes.

> First the woman in the portrait has eye brows, second the background to the painting may have been incomplete and third *La Gioconda* is

indeed a painting done in the da Vinci style, both of the subjet and her surroundings.

We know much about the Mona Lisa painting hanging in the Louvre. An examination of this painting shows it has no eye brows, that the landscape in the background has certain properties and that it is a completed painting. We also know this painting's provenance.

Mona Lisa, Louvre Museum Paris (restored)

Why then do art historians deem the Louvre Mona Lisa as the *La Gioconda* painting done at the behest of Francesco del Giocondo? It is strange that a well characterized and commissioned painting would still be in the artist's possession decades after the completion of the commission. This points to the Louvre painting as not being the 'Mona Lisa' painting commissioned at the behest of Francesco del Giocondo.

In a book published several years ago I presented the case that the Louvre Mona Lisa may in fact be a painting done by Leonardo da Vinci of his beloved mother while they briefly both resided together in Milan in the months before her death.

An important feature of the Louvre Mona Lisa is that it is painted on walnut. It is not a painting on canvas. This portrait would have taken a number of years to complete given that it is painted in oils, and given the technique Leonardo used to produce the sfumato effect, thin layers of diluted pigments. Most lay people who comment on how long it took da Vinci to paint this portrait do not understand the science and praxis of oil painting.

It is well documented that Leonardo da Vinci resided in Milan during two visits, serving as a court artist and engineer for Duke Ludovico Sforza. His first visit was from*1482 to 1499*. Leonardo left in 1499 following the French invasion and the fall of Ludovico Sforza, returning to Florence. Invited back he later returned to Milan in 1508 under the patronage of the French king, Louis XII, residing in Milan from 1508 to 1513.

The politics of the time would have precluded Leonardo receiving civil patronage from 1499 to 1508 by the power brokers in Florence due to his work for the Duke of Milan. The invitation to paint the Mona Lisa would have come from a patron not affiliated formally with the city fathers of Florence.

Lisa Giocondo (né Lisa di Gherardini) was born in Florence on June 15, 1479, on Via Maggio. Lisa was the eldest of seven children and had three sisters. Records show that on March 5, 1495, Lisa who was soon to turn sixteen, married 29-year-old Francesco di Bartolomeo del Giocondo. There is a double entendre in the name '*La Gioconda*' for in vernacular Italian it means both 'the happy one' and it also refers to the fact that Lisa is the wife of Francesco del Giocondo.

In short order the Giocondo family lived a block away from the residence of Ser Piero, Leonado's father, who was a notary in Florence and had Francesco del Giocondo as a client. It appears directly that Leonardo da Vinci, as a neighbour to his father, knew Lisa Gioconda before he set out to paint her.

Lisa and Francesco had six children: Piero, Piera, Camilla, Marietta, Andrea, and Giocondo between 1496 and 1502. Piera and Giocondo both died just weeks after their births. Two girls and two boys birthed by Lisa survived their infancy. Giocondo may have been a still birth.

It is believed by art historians that Francesco commissioned Leonardo to paint Lisa's portrait circa 1503. Lisa Gioconda was not yet twenty five years old when Leonardo began to paint her portrait. Francesco del Giocondo was 37 years old in 1503.

Six births in six years is quite a heavy burden for a woman to carry in modern times, let alone Renaissance times. The odds of mother surviving six births in Renaissance times is estimated at less than one-in-four. There is anecdotal evidence that during the period 1496 and 1502 Lisa Gioconda suffered from post-partum depression, hence the need for Leonardo to hire performers to 'cheer her up' as she sat for him (as mentioned by Vasari). Perhaps she was not a happy person after all.

Based on this chronology we should expect a twenty-some woman to be in the portrait. This is what we see in the Prado Mona Lisa. This is not what we see in the Louvre Mona Lisa. The woman in the Louvre Mona Lisa is considerably older than a mere twenty five years old. The woman in the Louvre Mona Lisa would perhaps be in her late fifties or early sixties.

It is interesting to note that the painting of *La Gioconda* is the only portrait commission accepted by Leonardo from a Florentine patron during the period 1500 to 1509. He declined other lucrative invitations to paint portraits for wealthy Florentine patrons during this period. This portrait of Lisa Gioconda clearly was for a familial friend.

It is plausible that Leonardo may have been encouraged to undertake the commission by his father Ser Piero. Or perhaps it was Francesco who encouraged Ser Piero to ask his son to undertake the portrait? Such a commission would be a multi-year undertaking given the techniques Leonardo used while painting a portrait. It seems plausible that Ser Piero may have waived his normal notary fees for his client Francesco del Giocondo while the La Gioconda painting was being undertaken. Perhaps forensic historians can search this matter out.

There is a well painted version of the Mona Lisa hanging in the Prado Museum in Spain that was once owned by the King of Spain and has a reasonable provenance. I believe there is sufficient evidence to show that the Prado Mona Lisa may in fact be the painting done by da Vinci at the behest of Francesco del Giocondo and not the Louvre Mona Lisa.

The background to the Prado painting has been lacquered over so that only the woman in the painting is seen. If I were the owner of this painting, with the background unfinished, it would make sense just to show the woman and cover over the background.

The woman in the Prado Mona Lisa is healthy and in her twenties. You will note the different facial structure in the Prado painting compared to the Louvre Mona Lisa. The Prado Mona Lisa has eye brows. The two Mona Lisa are clearly two different people.

Recently the Prado Museum undertook a restoration of their Mona Lisa. Here is the painting before the restoration.

Mona Lisa, Prado Museum Spain pre-restoration

Note as well how different the colour of the clothing is in the Prado painting compared to the painting in the Louvre. The colours are significantly different. She also has a pronounced bosom, something that would be expected of a lactating mother who breast feeds her children.

Here is the Prado Mona Lisa after the restoration:

Mona Lisa, Prado Museum Spain post-restoration

Both the Louvre Mona Lisa and the Prado Mona Lisa have some marked similarities as well as a few difference.

You may note that in the lower left hand corner of the Prado Mona Lisa the number 666 appears. Leonardo was a capable mathematician and is perhaps leaving us a clue as to when this painting was undertaken and perhaps even how long it took him to paint it.

Factor out 666 in terms of prime numbers and you get 2 x 3 x 3 x 37. It is worth noting that Francesco Giocondo was born in 1466 and was 37 years old in 1503. This may be Leonardo telling us he started this painting in

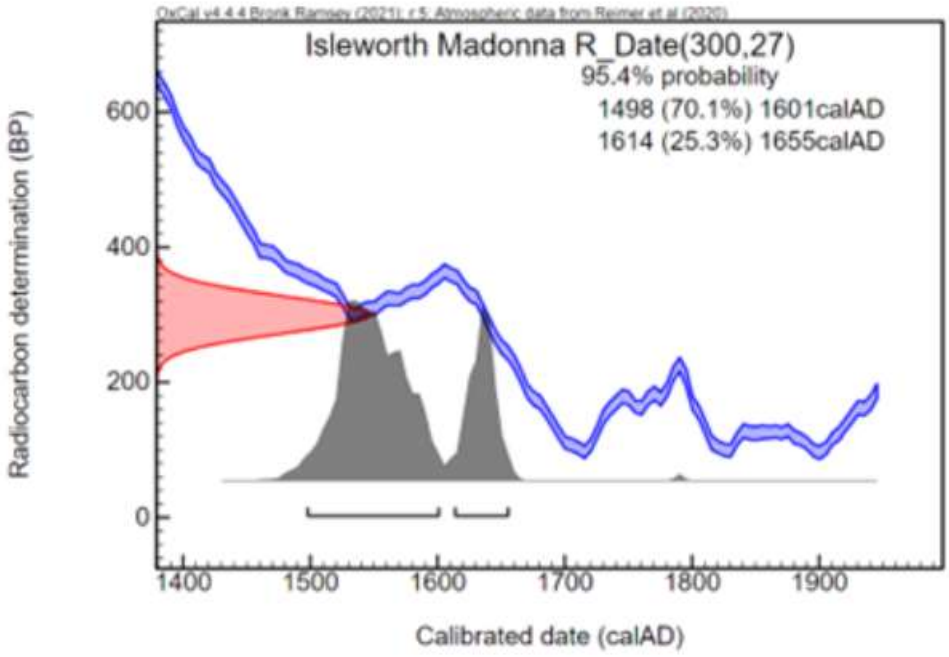
1503. The remaining 2 x 3 x 3 equates to 18 and so perhaps Leonardo worked on this painting for a period of 18 months before it was handed over to Francesco Giocondo.

There may also be a ‘double entendre’ to the number 666 for Francesco del Giocondo was known to be a particular aggressive business man and even as swagger. Or perhaps it was that Lisa herself that was a demanding person. Imagine the artist being pestered to complete the portrait ... how might you imagine Leonardo would take being pressed? If you work with oils you know it takes time for the layers to dry. If you are using his technique for sfumato it would take a considerably longer time than a simple portrait.

The background to both the Louvre and Prado Mona Lisa are painted with a blue pigment that is derived from the semi-precious stone lapis lazuli which is a metamorphic rock prized since antiquity for its intense deep-blue colour. It is a pigment consisting of lazurite, calcite, and pyrite. In renaissance times lapis lazuli was mined in Afghanistan. The highest quality pigments made from lapis lazuli would exhibit an intense and homogeneous royal blue. Put under a microscope you see also perceive flecks of golden pyrite and white calcite, which reflect back the light off the surface of the painting.

An important feature of the Prado Mona Lisa is that, in a fashion similar to the Mona Lisa hanging in the Louvre, it is painted on walnut. Walnut wood is prized for its rich, warm colour, a colour that ranges from pale brown to a deep, chocolate or coffee brown, often with darker streaks. The primary surface on both the Louvre and Prado paintings are a base of white paint.

Most other ‘rendering’ of the Mona Lisa, such as the Isleworth rendering, are painted on canvas. This makes it unlikely the Isleworth rendering was done by da Vinci. On the other hand students in da Vinci’s studio were encouraged to paint on canvas. A carbon dating of the Isleworth rendering was done.



There appears to be less than a 5% chance the canvas in the Isleworth rendering dates from the period 1503 to 1505, the period when Leonardo painted La Gioconda.

As well the base or primary layer on the Isleworth rendering is made of red-brown earth pigments, lead white, minium, and particles of carbon black and bone black. This is very different than the primary surface on both the

Louvre and Prado paintings. Minium, also known as red lead oxide, is a dense, bright orange-red pigment traditionally used in medieval or Renaissance era painting, and in medieval manuscripts. Red lead oxide is a toxic, inorganic pigment that is sometimes confused with cinnabar and vermilion. The Isleworth rendering may have perhaps been done within da Vinci's studio by one of his students.

It appears that both the Louvre and Prado Mona Lisa are of far greater importance and value than the Isleworth rendering. The importance and value of the Isleworth rendering is perhaps marginally greater than the St. Petersberg rendering. The Louvre Mona Lisa is worth approximately $ 1 Billion in 2026 dollars. The Isleworth rendering is perhaps worth a mere $ 10 million.

In the way of comparison we can look at the physical dimensions of the Louvre Mona Lisa as well as the Prado Mona Lisa.

Louvre Mona Lisa: 53 cm × 77 cm (ratio: 0.688, area: 4,081 square cm)

Prado Mona Lisa: 57 cm ×76.3 cm (ratio: 0.745, area: 4,360, square cm)

In comparison the Isleworth rendering is 64.5 cm x 84.5 cm (ratio: 0.76, area: 5,450 square cm). Given that it is 30 % larger than the Louvre or Prado Mona Lisa, whom ever painted the Ilseworth rendering appears not to have used the velum or tracing that Leonardo da Vinci used to paint his Louvre Mona Lisa.

It is also not that similar to the Prado Mona Lisa.

Ilseworth rendering

Both the Prado Mona Lisa and the Louvre Mona Lisa appear to be painted onto walnut panels using the same vellum or tracing. They appear to be comparable in size and ratio, and would have been painted to fit the walnut panels that were at hand. The differences between the two paintings are in the width and not the height of the paintings and therefore do not affect the central figure, which are comparable in size and sitting in a similar pose. The

columns on either side of the Prado Mona Lisa and the Louvre Mona Lisa are of little consequence in the paintings.

A study of the background landscapes will tell you that one painting was done in Milan (the Mona Lisa in the Louvre) and the other was done in Florence (the Prado Mona Lisa). Historians will remind you that Caterina, Leonardo's biological mother came to stay with him in Milan in the last few months of her life in 1493 and 1494. It is plausible that da Vinci sketched her sitting for him in a chair on the ramparts of the castle in Milan.

It is plausible that the Louvre Mona Lisa is a rendering of Leonardo's mother and would have been painted after he had finished the La Gioconda portrait sometime soon after 1503. This Louvre Mona Lisa was part of Leonardo's estate at his death in May 1519.

The Prado Mona Lisa was once in the possession of the Spanish King back to at least the 17th century. When the painting was acquired by the Spanish Royal collection is actively being investigated by art historians. The Mona Lisa hanging in the Prado entered its collection upon the Museum's founding in 1819.

I would speculate that the Prado Mona Lisa was acquired by the Spanish King directly from the Giocondo family, perhaps some time around 1538 when Francesco Giocondo passed away. After his death in 1538 Lisa Gioconda, his beloved wife, moved to a convent to reside with one of her daughters until she too passed away in 1542.

It is worth noting that Ser Piero, Da Vinci's father, passed away in 1504. Leonardo was estranged from the six other children that his father had sired. The year 1504 might have been when da Vinci set down his paint brushes and stopped work on the Prado Mona Lisa or La Gioconda.

It appears plausible that the Prado Mona Lisa is the portrait painting of Lisa Gioconda that was commissioned of Leonardo da Vinci by Francesco Giocondo on or about 1503. If this is the case then the Louvre painting is a second and somewhat different Mona Lisa.

The Isleworth rendering appears to have been done by a contemporary of Leonardo, but not by Leonardo himself. Perhaps it was done by one of da Vinci's students under his careful tutelage. It is too different from the other two paintings to have been done by the same artist.

I would not be surprised if the Isleworth rendering was done by someone like Raphael. In fact you might take a close look at Raphael sketches and paintings of the time then ponder a bit. Raphael emulated da Vinci in a number of his portrait paintings. A long shot might be Albrecht Durer.

If the Prado Mona Lisa is the painting done for Francesco Giocondo, then the Prado Mona Lisa would be the first Mona Lisa and therefore perhaps be as valuable as the Louvre Mona Lisa hanging.

As a final thought, how do we really know that Leonardo da Vinci did not paint the Prado Mona Lisa? Perhaps the provenance of the painting will sort this out.

{first published at ***Medium***, 2026}

Pictorial: My Name is Lisa …

Da Vinci's Painting – The Smiling Lady

by Patrick Bruskiewich

There is no painting in Western Art, short of perhaps Gustav Klimt's famous 19th century painting *The Kiss*, that is as well-known or as widely recognized as the small 16th century Renaissance painting hanging in the Louvre Museum in Paris of *The Smiling Lady* also known as *La Gioconda.*

Close up of Mona Lisa, Louvre Museum, Paris

You probably think I am playing with you by not calling this painting by its *vulgar* title – *The Mona Lisa*, but Leonardo never gave this painting a name, let alone that particular name. Here I use the term *vulgar* in the same way that Machiavelli described informal or vernacular Italian as a *vulgar* language,

compared to Latin which is a more formal language. The in which I use the word *vulgar* is meant to mean common or popular in its usage.

The name *Mona Lisa* is indeed the vulgar name to da Vinci's most famous painting. In actual fact, this unique painting has been known by a number of different names, but none of these names was attributed to the painting by the person who painted the picture itself.

Nowhere in Leonardo da Vinci's extensive and enduring manuscripts do we find any mention of the name of the painting itself, nor do we find any mention by him of who it is that he painted. We do not know who sat for the painting. Perhaps the name of both the sitter and the painting itself might be lost amongst Leonardo's vanished manuscripts. We may never know.

The fact that there is no mention of the *Provenance* of this unique painting is rather odd primarily because da Vinci was a consummate and precise portraitist. In all his other portrait paintings you find a *Provenance*. There is also evident within the paintings themselves meaning and context to all his other portrait paintings.

For those of you who do not know of the word *Provenance* here is a succinct definition: it derives from the Latin word *provenire* – to come forth. Provenance's modern English meaning is origin, source or derivation.

We know from where his other portraits spring forth, we know their origin; we know their derivation; we know their sources. It is, of course possible,

that he wrote of the painting *The Smiling Lady* and its subject in one of his now lost manuscripts. Yet that seems unlikely since in all of da Vinci's other portrait paintings he himself has given them titles, which he shared with others, whether the portrait were of a historical figure, or a person of his direct acquaintance.

In all his other portrait paintings, true to the representational nature of his art, Leonardo also included context within the paintings themselves. My sense is that in fact there is to be found context within the painting *The Smiling Lady*, but that context appears to have been overlooked by art historians during the last five centuries.

Yet for the painting of *The Smiling Lady* not to have an explicit Provenance, begs the question *Why*? It appears this painting is of a more personal, and less public, nature. Perhaps this sets *The Smiling Lady* in a special category as far as da Vinci's artistic sensibilities are concerned. Perhaps the name of the sitter and the meaning of the painting was too personal for him to share with the rest of the world.

Hence the title I have given the painting – *The Smiling Lady*.

How did Sir Isaac Newton express this – *Hypotheses non Fingo* – I feign no hypotheses. I do this to keep an open mind, and I invite you to do the same.

You have only to look at any of a number of his other portrait paintings such as *The Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani* (refer to *The Lady with an Ermine)* from

1489/1490 as an example of a portrait of someone of his direct acquaintance. *The Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani* has a complete and direct provenance, as well as context painted within the painting itself. And the painting is very life like.

The Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani 1489/1490

There are some who argue that the painting *The Smiling Lady* is not life like because the skin tone is rather yellow. Shame on all of you, those of you who do not trust Leonardo da Vinci to not represent his world as he sees it. Who are you to put words into his mouth? Who are you to see more than he wants you to see!

He wants us to see all his paintings as being life like, this one in particular as I will explain in due time. Maybe her skin is supposed to be yellow!

You can also look at da Vinci's historical portraits, such as the paintings of the Madonna and the Rocks which comes in several versions. The one I find most interesting is *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne (St. Anne and Marie with the Infant Christ)* from 1502-1513, a painting that was done at the same time as the painting *The Smiling Lady*, and which has direct bearing on our interpretation of this portrait.

This painting is rather important in that da Vinci has hidden a rather explicit message in the painting that has flown over the heads of most art historians. Can you see what message that Leonardo has put into this painting? Let me give you an answer to this interesting question.

He painted a vulture into the drapery of this painting. His mention was his step mother was a vulture, If you notice, the woman in the background of The Virgin and Child with St. Anne, 1502-1513 is the same woman in Leonardo's Mona Lisa. Obviously Leonardo loved his biological mother Caterina.

The principal reason people think Leonardo da Vinci was a homosexual was because of a seriously flawed 1910 psychoanalysis done by a very naive and *uber ehrgeizig* (over-ambitious) Sigmund Freud. Two years later in 1912 Freud, under pressure by his psychoanalytic peers, grudgingly admitted he was in error, then quickly and deftly swept his apology under the carpet.

I wrote about this message in a book I published a few years ago titled "*Leonardo da Vinci: a Memory of His Childhood: Freud's Rush to Judgment (A Psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud)*".

Some consider Sigmund Freud to be problematic. Some of my colleagues go so far as to suggest that the ***e*** in his name should be changed to an ***a*** and he be called a .... Well, you get the drift.

The Virgin and Child with St. Anne, 1502-1513

But by 1912 Freud's blunder had already been let loose on the world and the world believed the blunder. The year 1910 there had been a gathering of Leonardo da Vinci scholars and Freud not only did not want to miss the parade, he also had no qualms about lifting himself up on someone else's coat tails. Can you not see the message that da Vinci left in his painting the Virgin and Child with St. Anne?

Much of what Freud wrote about Leonardo da Vinci just doesn't make much sense in a modern context. Human thought does evolve, and yes we do have to start somewhere. But isn't the past the past, and the present, the present? I don't know about you but I think when it comes to Leonardo da Vinci *Venus Envy* makes more sense than Freud's phallic fallacy about him don't you?

When you closely study the artwork of Leonardo da Vinci you without doubt encounter *Venus Envy*. There is a myriad of beautiful women to be found in his painting and sketches. For instance there is his portrait of a woman from 1483.

In studying this sketch by da Vinci of the head of a woman several art historian have noticed a similarity between this sketch and a rather famous painting by Jan Vermeer (1632-1675) most famous painting – *The Girl With the Pearl Earring*. In my estimation Vermeer's painting of *The Girl With a Pearl Earring* ranks as one of the finest works of art in all cultures and of all times.

Portrait of a Woman, 1483

The similarity between da Vinci's sketch and Vermeer's painting is more than a coincidence for a large number of da Vinci's sketches and manuscripts were known to be in Holland at the time and would be purchased by the house of Windsor, including da Vinci drawing of the head of a woman.

We know for certain that Vermeer either heard of or were shown a number the da Vinci sketches and technical manuscripts then in Holland.

While da Vinci's sketch is well executed it is stern and hardly lifelike. In contrast, in his painting Girl with a Pearl Earring, Vermeer skillfully plays

with chiaroscuro (light and dark) and sfumato (gradation of colour) in ways that perhaps da Vinci could not even begin to understand.

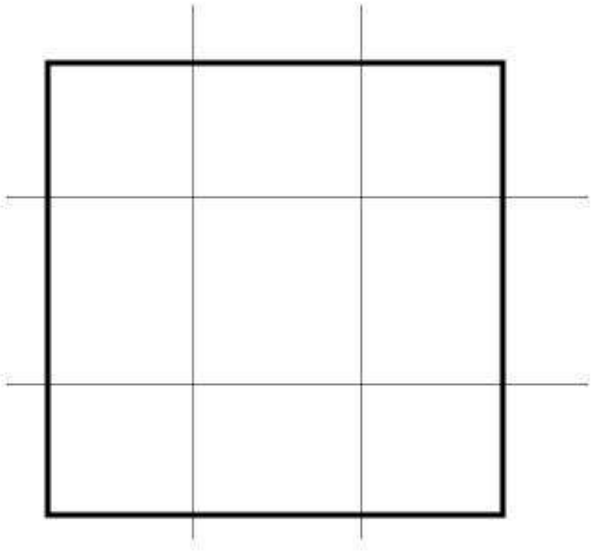
The Girl with the Pearl Earring by Jan Vermeer

Vermeer's subject is suspended in space in a superb composition. The play of light, for instance, off her white collar and back onto her cheek is so subtle as to be nearly imperceptible. Her lips come alive with colour with a luster that is moist and lifelike.

In this painting, the subject is not just beautiful – the subject is beauty itself. The composition is also an intellectual one, for hidden in the painting is a geometric treasure that lends to the argument that indeed Vermeer not only

studied the masters like da Vinci, but paid attention to mathematics as well and so was many steps ahead of his 16th century artistic predecessors.

In a simple composition, the "*Division by Thirds*", the space is divided in thirds (both vertically and horizontally).

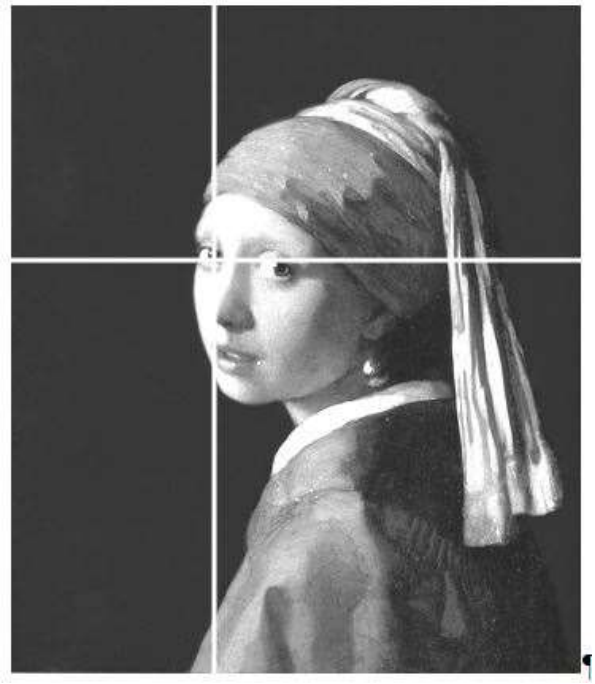


Division by Thirds

In such a simple construct the point of significance in the work of art is located at the intersection of one of the divisions. This divides the space along the lines of 1/3 to 2/3 (0.33 to 0.66)

Close to Division in Thirds is the Golden Ratio. It is a special mathematical ratio of 1.0 to 1.618 (0.38 to 0.62). From a mathematicians standpoint what is particularly intriguing is that Vermeer has divided his painting along a more

aesthetically pleasing ratio known as the Golden Ratio, with the intersection point on her right eye (her left eye is along the mid-line of the painting).



The Golden Ratio in Vermeer's Painting

This geometric construct in Vermeer's painting continues in the division of large, medium and small backgrounds, which also appear to follow the Golden Ratio. Notable 17th century mathematicians like Huygens and the Bernoulli family were aware of the Golden Ratio.

Returning to da Vinci's 1483 sketch, it too is composed along the Golden Ratio. It should not surprise us in that da Vinci was a friend of Luca Pacioli and Pacioli had written a book about the Divine Proportion and the Golden Ratio. Da Vinci in fact did the sketches for Pacioli's book. By design da Vinci's 1483 sketch and its composition is meant to be taken as a whole – the

composition and the content. Both the ratio and the woman are meant to be thought of as Divine or Perfect.

I think when you admire Leonardo da Vinci's admiration for the beauty of women in so many of his artwork you understand that he does love the beauty of women. On the other hand, with the other great renaissance artist Michelangelo it is a different story altogether. In comparison to the known proclivities of Michelangelo Buonarroti Simoni, a contemporary and competitor to da Vinci, Leonardo was perhaps at most an effeminate person. At most he may not have trusted woman, because of how he had been treated by his four step-mothers.

In my 2014 book *Freud's Rush to Judgment* I argue Leonardo da Vinci to be a shy man who had one biological mother and four step mothers, and had a dozen siblings. He was the eldest and it appears the most unloved of the children. Correct me if I am wrong but would it not be difficult for such a person to form meaningful relationships with family, and with woman other than his biological mother. He grew up with his paternal grandparents on a farm up the road from where his biological mother married then lived. The young boy's life was rather complicated to say the least.

Add to the equation the fact that he was a genius, and then ask yourself the question would Leonardo been able to develop trusting relationships with people, other than a handful of very carefully chosen, close friends? I see much of this in his artwork and paintings because I share similar sensibilities.

Ironically, my sensibilities were formed to a certain degree out of my admiration and respect for Leonardo da Vinci.

With this in mind take another look at his *The Smiling Lady*. In every major painting done by Leonardo da Vinci there is to be found an allegory, a metaphor, or a message. Why should his painting of *The Smiling Lady* be any different?

What is this Painting's Name?

by Patrick Bruskiewich

If it was Leonardo da Vinci who gave his *The Smiling Lady* the vulgar name, who was it? It was the Renaissance artist, art critic and art historian Giorgio Vasari who gave the painting its popular name – *The Mona Lisa* – and Vasari did this in a rather indirect and suspicious fashion. He did it through hear-say.

A generation after the death of Leonardo da Vinci Giorgio Vasari had just written the first popular history book of Renaissance Art titled *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*. Here is what Vasari wrote about Leonardo's most famous painting:

> *"For Francesco del Giocondo Leonardo undertook to execute the portrait of his wife, Mona Lisa. He worked on this painting for four years, and then left it unfinished; and today it is in the possession of King Francis of France, at Fontainbleau. If one wanted to see how faithfully art can imitate nature, one could readily perceive it from his head; for here Leonardo subtly reproduced every living detail. The eyes had their natural lustre and moistness, and around them were the lashes and all those rosy and pearly tints that demand the greatest delicacy of execution. The eyebrows were completely natural, growing thickly in one place and lightly in another and following the pores of the skin. The nose was finely painted, with rosy and delicate nostrils as in life. The mouth, joined to the flesh-tints of the face by the red of*

the lips, appeared to be living flesh rather than paint. On looking closely at the pit of her throat one could swear that the pulses were beating. Altogether this picture was painted in a manner to make the most confident artist – no matter who – despair and lose heart. Leonardo also made use of this device: while he was painting Mona Lisa, who was a very beautiful woman, he employed singers and musicians and jesters to keep her full of merriment and so chase away the melancholy that painters usually give to portraits. As a result, in this painting of Leonardo's there was a smile so pleasing that it seemed divine rather than human; and those who saw it were amazed to find that it was as alive as the original."

LE VITE
DE' PIV ECCELLENTI PITTORI,
SCVLTORI, E ARCHITETTORI
Scritte
DA M. GIORGIO VASARI PITTORE
ET ARCHITETTO ARETINO,
Di Nuouo dal Medesimo Ricorrette,
Et Ampliate.
CON I RITRATTI LORO
Et con l'aggiunta delle Vite de'viui, & de'morti
Dall'anno 1550. infino al 1567.
Prima, e Seconda Parte.

Vasari's Popular Art History Book

The provenance of his most famous painting and its vulgar name needs to be reconsidered given not only the messages da Vinci has not left us in his manuscripts, but in light of the messages he left us within the painting *The Smiling Lady*.

Let us therefore accept it as a matter of fact that Leonardo da Vinci never gave the painting of *The Smiling Lady* a name such as *The Mona Lisa*. Nor did he attribute it to any sitter such as La Gioconda.

There are direct references to the painting by visitors to da Vinci's studio, but these visitors describe the painting without mentioning a name. That is rather telling, for curiosity would have gotten the best of visitors like Raphael di Santi of Urbino, a contemporary and aficionado of da Vinci and contemporary painting praxis. And yet having seen, admired and studied the painting of *The Smiling Lady* not even Raphael mentions a name. As the Giorgio Vasari writes, the painting was viewed by a painter of the likes of Raphael di Santi of Urbino with awe –

> *"this picture was painted in a manner to make the most confident artist – no matter who – despair and lose heart."*

Raphael admired and respected Leonardo so much that he would immortalize da Vinci in his painting titled *The School of Athens* which he painted from 1509 to 1511, while da Vinci was still alive). Raphael places da Vinci in the centre of the painting.

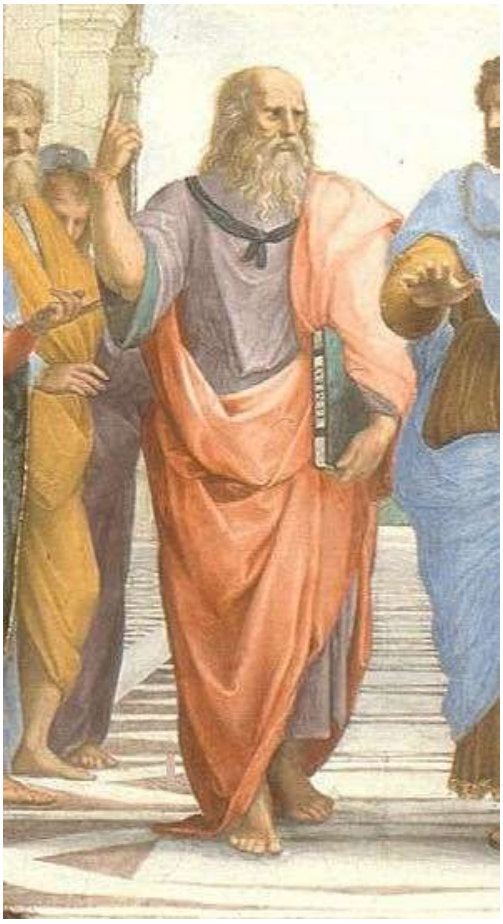
This painting is found in the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican. We also know what Raphael himself looks like for he painted in a cameo of himself off to the right of the painting. There is, as well, a brooding Michelangelo at the foot of the stairs in the forefront of this painting.

Raphael, The School of Athens, Vatican Rome

We can see what Leonardo da Vinci looked like in his fifty-fifth year in this painting.

It significant that such an important painting as *The Smiling Lady* was never given a name or a provenance by its creator, Leonardo da Vinci. Yet viewed in a personal manner, this perhaps lends us an important perspective to the painting itself, for while its beginnings might have been that of a

commissioned work – the portrait of a patron's wife (La Gioconda) – its final artwork is a reserved piece, a painting that was never given to the patron or person who supposedly commissioned a portrait.



Leonardo da Vinci in The School of Athens

This is an enigma that has yet to be fully explained. Perhaps, given the passage of five centuries, this enigma may never be fully and properly solved.

We know the painting of the Smiling Lady by many names, as the Mona Lisa, or La Gioconda, but Leonardo never gave the painting a name, nor can we

find anywhere in his remaining manuscripts a description of the painting, or mention who is the smiling woman. Historians of art find this odd, but I do not. The painting had a personal meaning that da Vinci chose not to fully share with the rest of the world. There are clues to its meaning.

The first clue is in the fact that we know that this painting was special to da Vinci for it is among only a handful of paintings he had at hand when he died:

- the Smiling Lady,
- St. John the Baptist, and
- the Virgin and Child with St. Anne.

These paintings hung in his chambers and workshop in Cloux, France, where he lived for the final years of his life and died under the patronage of King Francis of France. We know this for certain because of a record of a visit made by Cardinal Louis of Aragon in 1517 (a record made by Antonio de Beatis the Cardinal's secretary);

> *"On the 10th of October, 1517, Monsignor and the rest of us went to see, in one of the outlying parts of Amboise, Messer. Lunardo Vinci the Floretine, an old graybeard of more than 70 years, the most excellent painter of our time, who showed his Excellency three pictures, one of a certain Florentine lady done from the life at the instance of the late Magnificent, Giuliano de' Medici, another of St. John the Baptists as a youth, and one of the Madonna and Child in the lap of St. Anne, all*

most perfect, and from whom, since he was then subject to a certain paralysis of the right hand, one could not expect any more good work."

The record of the visit goes onto describe

"an infinite number of volumes, all in the vulgar tongue ... which if they should be published will be profitable and very enjoyable."

These volumes were da Vinci's manuscripts, written in vernacular Italian concerning anatomy, mechanics, dynamics, kinematics, astronomy, hydraulics, the praxis of art and other matters.

Some historians have noted the misspelling of Leonardo's name (Lunardo) as an error that in turn detracts from the other aspects of the written record of the visit, such as the person who commissioned the work (i.e. Giuliano de' Medici) or the fact that Leonardo was left-handed, while the paralysis being mentioned as afflicting the right hand.

The name issue is minor, the mention of Medici might well have come from the lips of da Vinci himself (for the secretary would not have made such a matter up) and while he is left handed in his writing there is the distinct possibility that da Vinci was ambidextrous when it came to his art. I myself paint with both hands even though I started out life left-handed, was forced to become right handed while at grade school (lefties were frowned upon at my elementary school) and now write mostly with my right hand.

For whatever it is worth, I always smile when I read this historical record for *Beatis* sounds so much like *bêtise,* which means stupidity and sounds a little like *fib* in French. And as Lunardo relates to Lunar, so it makes me wonder whether Antonio de Beatis thought the old Florentine a bit of a lunatic (Antonio, an Italian, would have known the proper spelling of Leonardo).

This little snippet from history reminds us to be skeptical. Yes, never take something on face value. Study it carefully to see what it really is!

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The Mystery of the Painting St. John the Baptist

We use to go to Catholic Church as a family every Sunday afternoon at 5. The church was called Resurrection Catholic Church and was a ten minute drive from where we lived.

Just as I was beginning to read about St. John the Baptist in ***The World of Leonardo*** the priest father Gallagher spoke about him during one of his sermons. So I took a particular interest in who *St. John the Baptist* was, if only to try to understand why da Vinci painted him. To be perfectly honest, after spending a half-century pondering this question I have yet to come to a sensible answer as to why *St. John the Baptist* was important to Leonardo da Vinci. Supposedly he was the patron saint of Florentine artists. But did this go as far as the famed dance of Salome and his beheading? Is it possible that within da Vinci's own life there was a Salome among his father's four wives, and many mistresses? Is there a deep personal allegory that da Vinci has left us in this painting?

Throughout much of his life Leonardo da Vinci was viewed as being touched, a genius and eccentric, so why not in his old age, and by people unfamiliar with Renaissance art and science.

In his choice to paint his last painting *St. John the Baptist* perhaps Leonardo is getting the last word in as far as his contemporaries are concerned. The hand of *St. John the Baptist* points up to heaven (refer to Fig. 23), a place that he himself would be entering soon and he had earned entrance to.

St. John the Baptist, Leonardo da Vinci (1513-1516)

As I mentioned, *St. John the Baptist* was the patron saint of Florentine artists. You can see that in the mention of San Giovanni Baptista in and around Florence which dates back to around 300 A.D. . In the 13th century June 24th was chosen as the day of the Nativity of John the Baptist. This day, June 24th is three months after the Annunciation and exactly six months before Christmas Eve. The Annunciation is when the angel Gabriel appeared before Mary and told her she would have a child whose name was to be Jesus.

The allegory of *St. John the Baptist* was is worth considering. He heralded the arrival of a Messiah. He baptised Christ. He also spoke out against the evils of his age. One of the evils was the marriage of Herod to Herodias.

We remember how *St. John the Baptist* lost his head, to the whims and whimsy of Salome who danced for Herod. She seduced the king and in his drunken state Herod offered Salome anything up to half his kingdom. At the behest of Salome's mother, Herodias , Salome asked for the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter. Although Herod was appalled by her request, a request that Salome would later regret, Herod under pressure of Herodias ordered the beheading of *St. John the Baptist*. The Catholic Church has decreed August 29th as the day of remembrance of *St. John the Baptist.*

It is as much an enigma why Leonardo painted his *St. John the Baptist* as is the mystery of *The Smiling Lady*. They form an important part of his later life, but I will just focus on The Smiling Lady for this painting makes more sense to me than that of the enigmatic man pointing to heaven.

What Leonardo da Vinci looked like in later life

As you look at the painting *St. John the Baptist* you must wonder what Leonardo thought of the afterlife. The expression on the face of the Saint tells me that he did not fear the afterlife. Da Vinci was a wise and philosophical man. He definitely had his own unique view of the world.

We know what he looked like near the end because of a sketch made of him by Francesco Melzi.

Portrait of Leonardo da Vinci by Francesco Melzi

As we know, the three paintings the Smiling Lady, St. John the Baptist, and the Virgin and Child with St. Anne now hang in the Musée du Louvre in France, for it was in France, under the auspices of a French King that Leonardo da Vinci spent the last years of his life and succumb to old age. These paintings were bought from the estate of da Vinci by King Francis.

Leonardo da Vinci went to France for the final three years of his life at the invitation of the King of France who became his Royal patron and gave him a Chateau to live in. On his death bed on the 2nd of May 1519 King Francis himself is said to have held Leonardo da Vinci's hand and witnessed his final

moments. This great Florentine artist lies buried in the Chapel of St. Hubert, at the Chateau Amboise in France.

Nowhere in his artwork do we really find any art that would be considered nightmarish, except perhaps in the depiction of conflict, battle and war. This leads to the question, did Leonardo ever have nightmares, or as the French say *Les Cauchemars*. If he did we do not find any mention of them in his remaining manuscripts.

Great minds tend to be eccentric. Shortly before he died, the great English scientist Isaac Newton went carefully through his writings and destroyed all those manuscripts that would show him in a bad light as far as history is concerned. There are inklings that Newton might have dabble in both numerology and alchemy, but much of that evidence is hearsay and not to be found within his written legacy.

Shortly after da Vinci's death the manuscripts and artwork of the estate of Leonardo da Vinci began to be broken up and sold off for money. Fortunate for us some of the most unique pieces of his life's work ended up in special collections like that of King Francis of France (now to be found in the Louvre) and in the Royal Collection in the United Kingdom now presided over by Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II.

But is it possible that some of Leonardo da Vinci's more nightmarish art and manuscripts have been lost forever? Shortly we will look at the painting Leda and the Swan as an example of his lost art and lost purpose.

Leonardo da Vinci was a genius – that is well documented. Many of his ideas were centuries ahead of their time. He must have felt alone and isolated during the Renaissance. Today, in the 21st century we have an almost mythical view of the Renaissance.

We also have a mythical view of Leonardo as well. Do not be naive to think that somehow he was warmly received by the citizens of Florence, or later those of Milan, for that matter. He had many enemies and few friends.

It is clear that da Vinci lived in his own rather solitary and insular world, even within his own family. For much of his adult life he struggled to find patrons, as he also struggled to complete his contractual obligations. Most of his minor works, such as his portrait paintings he did complete with a handful of exceptions.

Leonardo rarely finished a major work and left many works partly incomplete. In actual fact that is what happened to the painting that is known by the vulgar name *The Mona Lisa*. It was started and then for some reason left aside for many years then completed at a much later date.

Leonardo and Experiencia

Leonardo was also a man not merely before his time, but of the best of his time. This subtly is important. He read extensively, and drew from the

wisdom and *experiencia* of both his own eyes and that of his close and respected friends, who like him were cultured and well read.

In his manuscripts we find that da Vinci observes the following about *Experienca*

> *"And you, O Man, who will discern in this work of mine the wonderful works of nature, if you think it would be a criminal thing to destroy it, reflect how much more criminal it is take the life of a man; and if this, his external form, appears to thee marvellously constructed, remember that it is nothing as compared with the soul that dwells in that structure; for that indeed, be it what it may, is a thing divine. Leave it then to dwell in His work at His good will and pleasure, and let not your rage or malice destroy life – for indeed, he who does not value it, does not deserve it.*
>
> *The soul cannot be corrupted with the corruption of the body, but it is the body as it were the air which causes the sound of the organ, where when a pipe bursts, the wind will cease to have any good effect.*
>
> *Experience, the interpreter between formative nature and the human race, teaches how that nature acts among mortals; and being constrained by necessity cannot act otherwise than as reason, which is its helm, requires her to act.*

Experience does not err; only your judgement err by expecting from her what is not in her power. Men wrongly complain of Experience; with great abuse they accuse her of leading them astray, but they set Experience aside, turning from it with complaints as to our ignorance, causing us to be carried away by vain and foolish desires to promise ourselves, in her name, things are not in her power; saying that she is fallacious. Men are unjust in complaining of innocent Experience, constantly accusing her of error and of false evidence."

We can see that, for instance in his anatomical studies that we even today continue to admire.

We also see this in other aspects of his personal interest. For instance, when Leonardo joined the studio of Andrea del Verrocchio as a young apprentice the engineering works and scaffolding had been taken down from around the Grand Duomo in Florence and was sitting in a bone yard of sorts. This was the engineering works and scaffolding for the great undertaking over seen by Brunelleschi.

Da Vinci took the time to not only sketch much of the mechanisms but to also understand how they worked. Such understanding of engineering mechanisms made Leonardo a peacock among the paltry artists of Florence. In pages after pages of his manuscripts we see his fascination with movement, kinematics, dynamics and mechanisms.

He was not just content to draw the mechanisms. He would go onto try to understand the mathematics underlying form and function. His most well known foray into mathematics was the work he did with Luca Pacioli, providing drawings for Pacioli's *De Divina Proportione*. You could write an entire book just on the Pacioli and da Vinci collaboration, but that is for another day.

We cannot forget his Vitruvian Man and the perfection it was meant to represent. I am convinced that this drawing is a self portrait of da Vinci, a sort of *Yo Leonardo*, far surpassing any *Yo Picasso*. If you look closely at the face of his Vitruvian Man, and the later sketches he made of himself, you might convince yourself this is the case.

What does this all have to do with the woman smiling in his most famous painting? You have to get into da Vinci's mind to understand this painting. It was a private painting that has in recent years undergone detailed scientific scrutiny. We now know the painting lost some of its features, such as its eye brows and eye lashes (due to an unfortunate attempt to restore the painting), and of course the colours have darkened with age.

But what is most intriguing, although it should not be surprising, it appears that da Vinci painting over a previous painting for there appears to be another face within the painting, a face that is much different than the one we in fact see at the painting's surface – did you not know that?

We will return to this in a bit.

Da Vinci and His Books

Da Vinci himself acknowledged that in the late 1490's, when he was in middle age, that he was not then a 'man of letters.' Around this time he himself wrote

> *"I do not have literary learning ... [but] my concerns are better handled through experience rather than bookishness."*

He set out to rectify his lack of formal learning, for he worked hard at learning Latin. By 1503, around the time he is at work painting the Smiling Lady. The scholarly character and size of his library was exceptional for a Renaissance artist.

While many classical texts by Ovid, Livy, and Pliny had been translated into vernacular Italian, texts in his library by Vitruvius, Ptolemy and Euclid were still in their original Latin. We know for certainty that da Vinci read his Vitruvius, Ptolemy and Euclid.

Leonardo da Vinci himself wrote 120 books, his manuscripts, or which much has survived to the modern age. Unfortunately after his death, his estate became scattered because of the haphazard actions of his beneficiary. Historians believe about half of his manuscripts and sketches have been lost to time.

What inspired da Vinci is mentioned in a number of places in his manuscripts. For instance, there is this telling excerpt, (from his On Anatomy)

> *"I wish to work miracles. It may be that I shall possess less than other men of more peaceful lives, or than those who want to grow rich in a day. I may live for a long time in great poverty, as always happens, and to all eternity will happen, to alchemists, the would-be creators of gold and silver, and to engineers who would have dead water stir itself into life and perpetual motion, and to those supreme fools, the neuromancer and the enchanter."*

What remains of his manuscripts and sketches are mostly in private hands or in museums. Thankfully much of these materials have been reproduced and published in book form and are publicly available, for all to read. One of the finest and largest collection of da Vinci manuscripts, artwork and sketches is held by Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II.

In 2010 the author had an opportunity to study a large number of the more famous da Vinci sketches when HRH the Queen made a part of her collection available for public viewing at the Vancouver Art Gallery during the Vancouver Winter Olympics.

It would not surprise you to know that the author was one of the few people who brought a mirror to the exhibit to read da Vinci's writing, which perhaps you know was in the inverse.

Da Vinci and Painting

The painting the Smiling Lady, shares with us some of its story, if you see the world through Leonardo da Vinci's eyes.

We must first recognize that da Vinci was a realist in his art, his science and his professional praxis. His art was a rendering of realness and of the form and function of things. And in many ways he was not a subtle artist.

He writes about what painting means to him in his book on painting. Here is an excerpt that we will find helps us in better understanding the painting of the Smiling Lady:

> *"I am fully conscious that, not being a literary man, certain presumptuous persons will think that they may reasonably blame me, alleging that I am not a man of letters. Foolish folks! Do they not know that I might retort, as Marius did to the Roman patricians, by saying that they deck themselves out in the labours of others will not allow me my own. They will say that I, having no literary skill, cannot properly express that which I desire to treat of; but they do not know that my subjects are to be dealt with by experience rather than by words; and [experience] has been the mistress of those who wrote well. And so, as mistress, I will cite her in all cases.*
>
> *The mind of the painter must resemble a mirror, which always takes the colour of the object it reflects and is completely occupied by the images*

of as many objects as are in front of it. Therefore, you must know, O painter! That you cannot be a good one if you are not the universal master of representing by your art every kind of form produced by nature. And this you will not know how to do if you do not see them, and retain them in your mind. Hence as you go through the fields, turn your attention to various objects, and in turn look now at this thing and now at that collecting a store of diverse facts selected and chosen from those of less value …

If you contemn painting, which is the only imitator of all visible works of nature, you will certainly despise a subtle invention which brings philosophy and subtle speculation to the consideration of the nature of all forms – seas and plains, trees, animals, plants, and flowers – which are surrounded by shade and light. And this is true knowledge and the legitimate issue of nature; for painting is born of nature – or, to speak more correctly, we will say it is the grandchild of nature; for all visible things are produced by nature, and these her children have given birth to painting. Hence we may justly call it the grandchild of nature and related to God.

The eye, which is called the window of the soul, is the principal means by which the central sense can most completely and abundantly appreciate the infinite works of nature; and the ear is second, which acquires dignity by hearing of the things the eye has seen. If you, historians or poets or mathematicians, had not seen things with your eyes you could not report them in writing. And if you, O poet, tell a

story with your pen, the painter with his brush can tell it more easily, with simpler completeness and less tedious to be understood. And if you call painting dumb poetry, the painter may call poetry blind painting. Now which us the worst defect? To be blind or dumb? Though the poet is as free as the painter in the invention o his fictions, they are not so satisfactory to men as paintings; for, though poetry is able to describe forms, actions, and places in words, the painter deals with the actual similitude of the forms, in order to represent them. Now tell me which is the nearer to the actual man: the name of man or the image of man? The name of man differs in different countries, but his form is never changed but by death.

And if the poet gratifies the sense by means of the ear, the painter does so by the eye – the worthier sense; but I will say no more of this but that, if a good painter represents the fury of a battle, and if a poet describes one, and they are both together put before the public, you will see where most of the spectators will stop, to which they will pay most attention, on which they will bestow most praise, and which will satisfy them best. Undoubtedly painting, being by a long way the more intelligible and beautiful, will please most. Write up the name of God … in some spot and set up His image opposite and you will see which will be most reverenced. Painting comprehends in itself all the forms of nature, while you have nothing but words, which are not universal, as form is, and if you have the effects of representation, we have the representation of the effects. Take a poet who describes the beauty of

a lady to her lover and a painter who represents her and you will see to which nature guides the enamored critic.

Certainly the proof should be allowed to ret on the verdict of experience. You have ranked painting among the mechanical arts, but, in truth, if painters were as apt at praising their own works in writing as you are, it would not lie under the stigma of so base a name. If you call it mechanical because it is, in the first place, manual, and that it is the hand which produces what is to be found in the imagination, you too, writers, who set down manually with the pen what is devised in your mind. And if you say it is mechanical because it is done for money, who falls into this error – if error it can be called – more than you? If you lecture in the schools, do you not go to whoever pays you most? Do you do any work without pay? Still, I do not say this as blaming such views, for every form of labour looks to its reward. And if a poet should say, "I will invent a fiction with a great purpose," the painter can do the same, as Apelles painted Calumny. If you were to say that poetry is more eternal, I say the works of a coppersmith are more eternal still, for time preserves them longer than your works or ours; nevertheless they have not much imagination. And a picture, if painted on copper with enamel colours, may be yet more permanent.

We, by our arts, may be called the grandsons of God. If poetry deals moral philosophy, painting deals with natural philosophy. Poetry describes the action of the mind, painting considers what the mind may effect by the motions [of the body]. If poetry can terrify people by

hideous fictions, painting can do as much by depicting the same the same things in action. Suppose that a poet applies himself to represent beauty, ferocity, or a base, a foul, or a monstrous thing, as against a painter, he may in his ways bring forth a variety of forms, but will the painter not satisfy more? Are there not pictures to be seen, so like the actual things, that they deceive men …The painter strives and competes with nature …"

His modest beginnings saw him sketching the countryside of his beloved home. The countryside appears to be Campo Zeppi.

A Sketch of the countryside by Leonardo da Vinci (1473)

It being a personal painting it should not surprise us that behind the lady with a smile is in fact a countryside that has meaning to him. It is just a question of sorting out where the countryside is and what is its meaning. Some of tried others have just conceded they were conceited and merely stated it has no meaning.

I think the country side in the painting *The Smiling Lady* is another of the clues that da Vinci meant to leave us to help provide context to this painting. I have a theory and will present it in due time as I provide my full explanation of the painting.

Vitruvius Rediscovered

Da Vinci had a rather unique library for his times. Some of da Vinci's favorite books included a series of architecture and engineering treatise from the 1st century BC written by the scholar and architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio. Marcus Pollio is widely referred to as Vitruvius.

Vitruvius was to ancient architecture what Euclid was to ancient geometry – he was a chronicler of his age within his own field of expertise – Roman architecture and engineering.

Towards the last decades of the 15th century Vitruvius' monumental work "**The Ten Books of Architecture**" was rediscovered by European scholars. Through these rediscovered treatise Vitruvius became an Oracle for many

important Renaissance architects, artists and scientists in such avante-garde places as Florence.

Amongst the Renaissance artists who were directly influenced by Vitruvius included Masaccio, Donatello, Brunelleschi and Leonardo da Vinci. We know this directly from their writing and their artwork.

To be an Oracle meant that you were the agency or medium by which the gods were suppose to speak – the ancients were considered "godlike" by the Italians of the 15th century. In rediscovering the knowledge of the ancients authors like Euclid or Vitruvius were the place from which Renaissance thinking sought wisdom. Both Donatello and Brunelleschi went so far as to excavate ancient ruins, and old buildings throughout Italy.

In Rome both Donatello and Brunelleschi were eventually sent packing back to Florence went they were arrested for their curiosity. It appears that someone may have accused them of grave robbing. They might have also been in search of the grave of their friend Masaccio, who went missing in Rome. Masaccio was invited from Florence to Rome to undertake a commissioned painting and went missing. He might have been ensnared by the Inquisition. (If you want to learn more about the mysterious disappearance of Masaccio read *The Death of Masaccio – His Painting the Trinity, and the Hidden Message Within*).

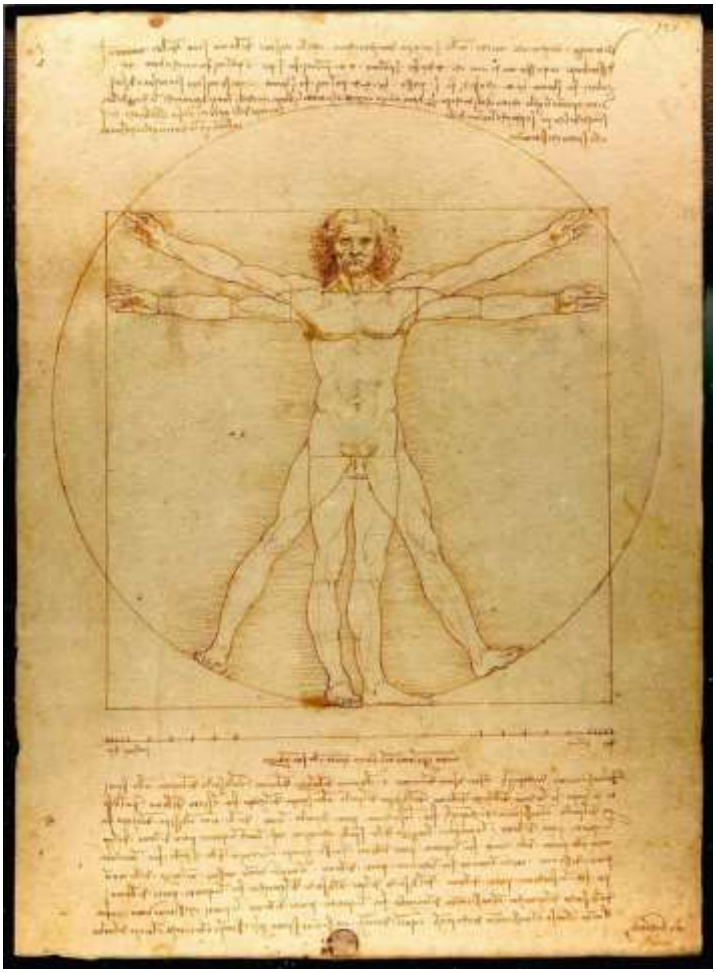
In studying the ancient, Renaissance architects, artists and scientists followed the practice of Euclid, Vitruvius and other ancient scholars and decided to

place a high value on theory. In their view, and in particular that of da Vinci, if any occupation or profession were to have any dignity and be worthy of honour, it must have an intellectual basis.

We can, even today, learn a great deal from the Renaissance architects, artists and scientists; For instance, they strove to make themselves scholars and gentlemen, to associate with those that governed and the learned within their society, and to rise above prejudices that saw them as mere craftsman.

Along with architecture, Vitruvius also commented on human proportion and the ideal of beauty. He explained that the height of a well-proportioned man is equal to the length of his out stretched arms. The body height and the length of the outstretched arms form a square that encloses the human body, while the hands and the feet touch a circle with the navel at the centre.

One work of art that was a direct draw from Vitruvius's treatise was Leonardo da Vinci's Human Figure in a Circle and Square, (his Vitruvian man) illustrating Vitruvius on Proportion, (1485-90, 34.3cm x 24.5 cm, Academia, Venice)



Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man

It wasn't just because of its immense body of knowledge that Vitruvius' "The Ten Books of Architecture" took on its valuable place during the Renaissance; the book became the subject of exhaustive examination and interpretation partly because the recovered text was only a copy, which, unlike the original, was not illustrated.

Since there was no illustrations in the recovered text passages that referred to illustrations were ambiguous or open to varied interpretations.

This may have prompted Brunelleschi to undertake the arduous job of rediscovering the technical basis behind Vitruvius' book through his own drawings and efforts and through excavations of ancient ruins in Florence, Rome and elsewhere.

Along with the rediscovery by Renaissance scholars and artists of the architectural treatise by Vitruvius, there was the rediscovery of mathematical treatise by Euclid, Ptolemy and Archimedes, to name a few of the more significant classical scholars.

These ancient treatises were procured through the patronage of Cosimo Medici, many for the library of the University of Florence. Through his patronage, Cosimo made possible the appointment of Manuel Chrysolaros to the University of Florence in 1397.

Chrysolaras, working closely with the Renaissance Humanist Niccolo di Niccoli, would establish in Florence the first centre for Hellenic studies in all of Italy and would set out to procure and translate many important Greek treatise. Islamic scholars were also to be found in Florence. This quest for ancient knowledge would become the impetus for the acquisition of old and forgotten treatise from all over the Mediterranean.

These ancient treatise were studied avidly by many of the influential Florence artists of the day. Of the important ancient documents, Euclid's treatise Optics is noteworthy for its effect on Renaissance art and science.

We know that da Vinci's *The Proportions of the Human Figure* (after Vitruvius) dates from 1490. When Leonardo da Vinci did this drawing he was thirty eight years old, and in good health. I have often wondered whether his Vitruvian Man is a self-portrait of the artist himself, for the man in the drawing is eight heads tall, and da Vinci himself had such a height. It is likely his mother, Caterina, was tall as well.

I mention the eight heads because artists cannot agree on the ideal proportion of the human figure. Some artists swear that the ideal proportion of the human figure is seven-and one-half heads of height, while others stand by eight. If you are da Vinci you state that it is eight heads:

When it comes time to look closer at the geometry within the painting of The Smiling Woman, the da Vinci preference for eight heads will be useful.

If you take a moment to now study his remarkable painting of The *Smiling Lady* you might notice if you see something remarkable? Countless millions have looked at this painting but failed to grasp a wonderful message that Leonardo da Vinci has himself left for us. There is geometry in it. It has to do with fore ground and back ground as well as angle and the like. Before I provide my explanation I will let you try to discover this for yourself.

What is the expression – sometimes to hide something away you should place in it full sight ...

Leonardo and the Form of the Face

Leonardo took special note of facial features. You notice this in many of his sketches. In his manuscripts you find particular mention of the form of the face:

> *"If you desire facility in keeping in your mind the expression of a face, first learn by heart the various different kinds of heads, eyes, noses, mouths, chins, throats, and also necks and shoulders.*
>
> *Take as an example noses. There are ten different types:*
>
> - *Straight,*
> - *Bulbous,*
> - *Hollow,*
> - *Prominent (either above or below the centre),*
> - *Acquiline,*
> - *Regular,*
> - *Simian,*
> - *Round, and*
> - *Pointed.*
>
> *These divisions hold good as far as profile. Seen from the front, noses are of twelve types:*
>
> - *Thick in the middle,*

- *Thin in the middle,*
- *With the tip broad,*
- *Narrow in the base,*
- *Narrow at the tip,*
- *Broad at the base,*
- *Nostrils broad,*
- *Nostrils narrow,*
- *Nostrils high,*
- *Nostrils low,*
- *Openings visible,*
- *Opening hidden by the tip.*

And similarity you will find variety in other features; of which things you ought to make studies from nature and so fix in your mind. Or when you have drawn a face from memory, carry with you a small note-book in which you have noted down such features, and then when you have cast a glance at the face of the person whom you wish to draw you can look privately and see which nose or which mouth has a resemblance to it, and make a tiny mark against it in order to recognize it again at home. Of abnormal faces I here say nothing, for they are kept in mind without difficulty."

In our efforts to understand the Smiling Lady we shall use a number of facial clues, including the nose structure, to better understand the painting. We might augment our comparison by comparing chins and the eye structure as well.

There appears to be a common facial structure that appears on a number of Leonardo da Vinci's his sketches and paintings. It appears in the Smiling Lady.

In fact, the face that is the Smiling Lady may be the one of the faces in the painting the Virgin and Child with St. Anne, Leonardo da Vinci (1503). This may be a significant fact in why both paintings were kept by da Vinci when he went into exile in Cloux.

Leda and the Swan

There is one thing I noticed when I first saw the cartoons or sketches done by Raphael of Leonardo's lost or unfinished painting Leda and the Swan. It was not the voluptuousness of her or how much she reminded me of my summer canoe friend. It was the familiarity of the face, a face that you find in a number of da Vinci's artworks.

You can see that in a painting that is a Renaissance copy of da Vinci's painting (A Renaissance Copy of Da Vinci's Leda and the Swan).

I think this painting is an allegory where the Swan is perhaps an allegory to a man that seduced da Vinci's biological mother. I think the four children in the painting are four of da Vinci's siblings and I think Leda is his mother.

You might notice that the face in Leda is the same face in *The Smiling Lady*.

A Renaissance Copy of Da Vinci's Leda and the Swan

The Face Within the Mona Lisa Painting in the Louvre

At this point in my life I am convinced that the Mona Lisa in the Louvre is in fact not a painting of Lisa Giaconda, but is instead a keep sake painting of his mother. I am convinced the painting should at the very least be called The Smiling Lady, or at the very most called Mona Caterina.

What we do know is that da Vinci's mother's first name was Caterina, and that she was born in 1434. We know this with certainty because we know she died in 1494 at age 60 of malaria (church records tell us this). Leonardo, we know with certainty, was born in 1452 when Caterina was eighteen years old. Leonardo was the bastard son of Caterina, but we know for certain that he was anything but a 'bastard.'

Caterina was married off immediately after Leonardo's birth to an old servant of Ser Piero's family, a certain Acattabriga di Piero di Luca. The marriage records show that Acattabriga di Piero di Luca married a girl named Caterina Amadori in 1452. There was in fact an Andreas Amadori that had a daughter named Caterina. The books are from 1437, a few years after her birth in 1434. We know this from notebooks that are to be found in a US university library. The best I can tell, during her lifetime Caterina has five children, Leonardo and four others.

Why no one has written of this in a definitive book is a curiosity, for the record is easily verified. Why then the mystery? Perhaps when, in the translation *Ama Dori* becomes *a member of the guild of love* ... If one were to take her

name at face value it becomes problematic, for then is one to assume she is a concubine or a kept lady. Is it possible the five children she had, has a common father?

We know that Leonardo grew up on the farm with his grandparents to age 16 and that his mother lived up the road to him. His father has four wives during Leonardo's lifetime – and fathers thirteen children. Leonardo's first step mother enters his life at 18 months. Leonardo's first remembrance at age three is that of a "*raptor at his cradle*."

The incident of the raptor and the cradle is immortalized in the painting of *The Madonna and Child with St. Anne* – can you see the raptor in the painting?. This is one of only three paintings that da Vinci keeps with him when he grows old.

The very first matter we need to address is the fact that Leonardo da Vinci never gave his famous painting a name. The two common names for the painting, the *Mona Lisa* as well as *La Gioconda* were given to the painting was given by others.

The name *Mona Lisa* was given the painting by Vasari who wrote of de Vinci many years after Leonardo's death in his famous book *Delle Vite de' piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, ed Architettori* (The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects) in 1550.

A second edition of Vasari's book came out in 1568. This edition includes an etching which is purported to be a likeness of Leonardo da Vinci. However, Vasari did not know Leonardo da Vinci. Vasari was only eight years old when Leonardo da Vinci died in 1519.

The excerpt from Vasari's book that deals with the painting is the following"

> *"For Francesco del Giocondo Leonardo undertook to execute the portrait of his wife, Mona Lisa. He worked on this painting for four years, and then left it unfinished; and today it is in the possession of King Francis of France, at Fontainbleau. If one wanted to see how faithfully art can imitate nature, one could readily perceive it from his head; for here Leonardo subtly reproduced every living detail. The eyes had their natural lustre and moistness, and around them were the lashes and all those rosy and pearly tints that demand the greatest delicacy of execution. The eyebrows were completely natural, growing thickly in one place and lightly in another and following the pores of the skin. The nose was finely painted, with rosy and delicate nostrils as in life. The mouth, joined to the flesh-tints of the face by the red of the lips, appeared to be living flesh rather than paint. On looking closely at the pit of her throat one could swear that the pulses were beating. Altogether this picture was painted in a manner to make the most confident artist – no matter who – despair and lose heart. Leonardo also made use of this device: while he was painting Mona Lisa, who was a very beautiful woman, he employed singers and musicians and jesters to keep her full of merriment and so chase away*

the melancholy that painters usually give to portraits. As a result, in this painting of Leonardo's there was a smile so pleasing that it seemed divine rather than human; and those who saw it were amazed to find that it was as alive as the original."

It is important to note that it is Francesco del Giocondo that describes his wife as *Mona Lisa*, and not the painting as the *Mona Lisa*. It is also important to note that Vasaris does not name the painting either, instead it is implied by others that the painting should be named *Mona Lisa*.

One of the most important questions we need to address is why the person who asked da Vinci to undertake the painting, Francesco del Giocondo, never took possession of the painting. The myth is that it was not completed in time. But, nonetheless the painting was completed. This is a grand mystery which we will consider shortly.

Near the end of her life Caterina arrived in Milan where da Vinci is living and working in 1493. The following year she died in 1494 of malaria, in Leonardo's arms, age 60. A few years later da Vinci paints his iconic painting – *The Smiling Lady*. I think it is painted from the vantage point of the Sforza castle in Milan and the bridge in the background is the Ponto Vecchio at Pavia.

Besides, the skin and eye colour of the woman on the painting, *The Smiling Lady*, is that of a much older woman suffering from anemia, malaria or hepatitis. Leonardo's mother died of malaria and liver complications on June 26th, 1494 in Milan, with her son at her side.

Art historians claim the coloring of the painting has yellowed with age. I am unconvinced of this. All of da Vinci's other portraits have not aged or changed colored with time.

Why should we expect the painting if *The Smiling Lady* to be any different. I believe *The Smiling Lady* is the coloring as it meant to be, of a woman, his mother, suffering from anemia, malaria or hepatitis.

Besides, I sense that the same face appears over and over again in da Vinci's artwork, in his sketches, in *The Smiling Lady* and even in Leda and the Swan. Here she is again, a bit older mind you yet still both heavenly and Madonna like.

The Mathematician in Me

The mathematician in me also noticed the pixilated number 72 on the Ponto Vecchio. When you factor the number into its prime numbers, as Leonardo knew to do you get 2 x 2 x 2 x 3 x 3 = 72.

Being observant I sense then that the three arcs of the bridge the Ponto Vecchio, are meant to be the three angles in an isosceles triangle. If the central angle is 72, this means the second angle is 54.

We know that this painting was begun around 1506. Well, is it a coincidence that 1506 – 72 = 1434, the year that Caterina Amadori, Leonardo's mother, was born?

What about the other angle? Well 1506 – 54 = 1452 is the year that Leonardo da Vinci was born.

Hardly coincidences – these numbers are more clues deliberately set into the painting by an adoring son. As a mathematician I was looking beyond the obvious!

Lisa Gherardini – La Gioconda

In 2012 a French scientist, studying the Mona Lisa using advanced fluorescent techniques, found a second face underneath the face we see on the painting. This second face, within the painting is of a much younger woman (probably Lisa Giaconda) and not the much older face on the painting.

Who is the Lisa that Francesco del Giocondo names? It is his third wife (for he had been previously twice widowed). His third wife was Lisa Gherardini who was born in 1479. At sixteen she was married in 1495 to a husband that was nineteen years older than her. When she might have been sitting for a portrait by da Vinci she would have been in her twenties.

It was common practice for women to marry young in Renaissance times for bearing children was a hazardous undertaking due to infant mortality rates and mortality rates amongst the mothers themselves.

The Face Within the Painting

As it happens, during Renaissance times, the younger the mother the lower the risk, for younger mothers tended to produce smaller babies, which pose lower risks to both baby and mother. Mortality risks were higher for woman bearing boys, compared to girls, because boys tend to have larger more pronounced heads than girls and the birth canal and vagina could only stretch so far. Leonardo da Vinci's mother may have been about twenty years of age.

Today it is common practice to incise the vagina a small amount to help the birth along (as oppose to let it tear) then sew it afterwards, under sterile hospital conditions. A tear in Renaissance time brought septicemia and eventual death.

Bleeding out due to complications and tearing was commonplace in Renaissance times. The final stage of child birth, the passing of the placenta tends to be forgotten by all except those who have born children. Caesarean sections were not an option in the 15th century, as they are today in the modern world.

If you were past the age of 30 in Renaissance Times and were expecting child, you did not expect to survive the ordeal and placed yourself in the hands of God, the surgeons of the day were all but useless.

Wet nurses were also prevalent at the time because young girls tended not to have fully developed breasts and without breast milk babies soon succumb to malnourishment and disease. Buxom peasant girls were sometimes brought to the city from the country to breast feed the children of the well to do in Renaissance Italy.

With regards to Francesco del Giocondo, at least one of his previous wives died in child birth, a common tragedy which has only been lessen in the modern world in modern times. Throughout much of the third world mortality among mother and child is still common place.

For those of you fixated on the fact mothers in the Renaissance were young, you might take a moment to read Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and ask yourself how old Juliet was. This play is based on a Renaissance era Italian poem *Romeus and Juliet* that Shakespeare used in the translation. The practicalities of procreation is what governed the practices of the age of the Renaissance.

On many matters as complicated as this, it is important to try to keep an open mind.

Pictorial: Think Outside the box

Some Nice, Dice Games for a Bachelorette Party

A die has six sides, with three odd numbers and three even ones. You can play many different and fun dice games at a *Bachelorette Party*. Tossing an odd number might lead to one result, while tossing an even number leads to another.

The type of die I recommend for *Bachelorette Party* games is the large novelty dice which is perhaps six times larger in volume than a traditional dice. With a novelty dice everyone in the game can see the toss results instantly.

So what kind of dice games come to mind? You can play Truth or Dare.

The Game of Truth or Dare

In this version of the game, the *Dare* option are the 'odd tosses' while the *Truth* option are the 'even tosses.'

To play this game, you will need a die, six small pieces of paper for each player and pencils for the players to write on the pieces of paper.

Each payer writes down three *Dares* and three Truth questions. These *Truths* and *Dares* are put in separate piles, one for the Truths the other for the Dare, and are to be drawn on each toss by a player. After a paper is drawn it is put back again on the bottom of the pile.

The bride to be starts the game by taking the first toss. Whatever number the bride to be tosses becomes the 'Pass.'

Say she tosses a two, then every time a two is tossed by a player in the game the bride to be has the option to either get the player to play their toss, or decide for the opposite type (which in this case would be a Dare question) or gives them a pass. If she gives them a pass then the toss goes to the next player.

Each player takes a turn starting with the bride to be then the person sitting to her right. You go clockwise in the game.

Whatever a player tosses becomes their move – either a Dare or a Truth question.

We have all played Truth or Dare. Think of all the fun you can have with this game at a *Bachelorette Party*!

A Dare question might be ‘I dare you to take off your bra.’ It’s a Dare … so the person does not have to do it if they don’t want to.

A Truth question might be ‘where and when did you lose your virginity (notice I did not ask with whom …). It’s a Truth question so the player may not wish to answer the question.

The interesting twist to this game is what happens when you waiver on your pick!

If you pick a Dare you refuse to do you … then you will have to draw a Truth question, and must answer it!

If you pick a Truth question which you refuse to answer then you will have to pick a Dare which you must do!

Oh think of all the fun you can have with this version of Truth or Dare!

The Game of Trick or Treat

In this game a Trick is a performance and a Treat is something you have to do for the bride to be. A Trick would be an odd number and a Treat would be an even number. There is no pass in this game.

A few days before the *Bachelorette Party* you should tell the attendees they will be called up to perform three or four presentations at the party. You might have a CD player with some CD's ready for this game. You can ask the attendees to bring their favorite CD to your Party. A book of romantic poetry might also be useful.

Whatever you do, don't tell your attendees you will be playing Trick or Treat.

A Trick might be singing a favorite song, or reciting a romantic poem, or performing a dance, or reciting a short story or a familiar nursery rhyme.

A Treat for the bride to be might be a foot massage, a neck massage or something along those lines. It could be as wonderful as a kiss on both cheeks, like the French share with their very close friends. Or you can fix her a special cocktail.

The best Treat might be something truly romantic like the dance of the seven veils!

Pictorial: Now for something totally different …

The Game of Fact or Fiction

In this game you are asked to tell a tale. If the roll is odd it is fiction and if it is even then it is true.

You might choose to narrow the theme. For instance, it could be about something while growing up, or something about puberty, or something related to love and romance. Each story should be at least three minutes long but not more than five.

Each tale should begin with "*Once upon a time …*"

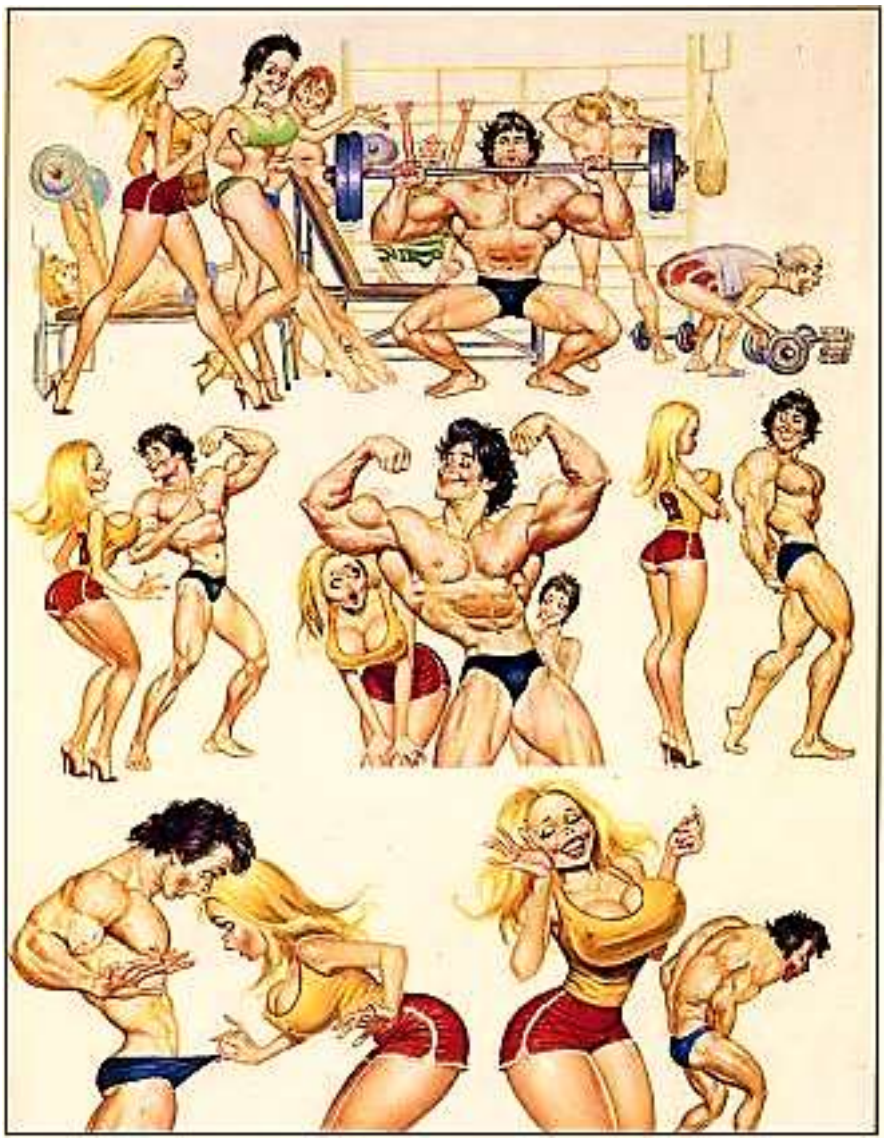
The Game of Phobia or Philia

In this game you are asked to recount either something you fear (a phobia) if the toss is odd, and something you like (Philia) if the toss is even.

You might choose to narrow the theme. Again it could be about something while growing up, or something about puberty, or something related to love and romance.

You have to also explain why it is you have this particular phobia or philia, in at least fifty words but no more than three hundred.

Pictorial: Its kind'a small … don't you think?



The Game of Ask or Answer

The bride to be is the Mistress of this game.

If you roll an even number you may ask the bride to be anything you want. If you roll an odd number she can ask you anything she wants.

This is a rather candid game so watch out!

The Game of Striply

This game is easy. The bride to be is the Mistress of the Game.

If you roll an odd number you have to take off a piece of clothing. If you roll an even number you are allowed to put something back on. It doesn't have to be your own clothing … by the way.

The Mistress of the game tells you what to take off or what you can put back on.

If you are completely nude and you roll an odd number, the Mistress decides what she wants you to do! You cannot say no to the bride to be.

Pictorial: So which do you prefer?

None?

One, or

All?

Photographic Art

A Modern Version of a Famous Icon by Rose Lang

[**Paris**] I am a great fan of the Dadaist and surrealist photographers like the American ManRay. One of ManRay's most famous pictorials is his photograph of Kiki de Montparnasse, a pictorial known as the Violon D'Ingre. I recently had fun and converted this black and white pictorial into something modern and colourful. Isn't she beautiful?

Pictorial: Sarah and her alter ego

A Valentine's Collection by Isabella Montsouris

[**Montreal**] Each year around this time I am asked to take intimate photographs for my women friends. They are Valentine's gifts to their significant other. This year I asked them whether they would mind sharing …

Here is Michelle …

Here is Gabriella

Here is Stephanie …

Here is Grace …

Here is Jacqueline …

Here is Eve, being bold …

Here is Stella, being nervous ..

Here is Breanna, being shy …

Here is Ruth …

Here is Hilda …

Here is Gwynn …

Here is Dorothy …

Here is Anna …

Pictorial: Something Private

This is the pictorial I took of my boyfriend for Valentine's Day.

History

Giorgio Vasari: Renaissance Art Historian

" *What a happy age we live in*!" When Vasari wrote these words it was the middle of the sixteenth century and he was alive and well in Renaissance Florence. Yet his words appear as modern as any from the twenty-first century.

Giorgio Vasari (1511 – 1574), was a late Renaissance painter, architect and art historian. The Cardinal Ippolito de Medici, Pope Clement VII and the Dukes Alessandro and Cosmo, successively engaged him in their service. Vasari worked between Florence and Rome as a painter and architect.

In and above a handful of works of art, Giorgio Vasari left a splendid – but somewhat legendary – account of the lives of a handful of the most remarkable artists of the 15th and 16th century. Vasari wrote his *Delle Vite de' piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, ed Architettori* (The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects) in 1550.

The book was dedicated to Cosimo de' Medici – the great Florentine patron of the arts – was printed in Florence. Cosimo Medici (1389-1464) was regarded as the model for Niccolo Macchiavelli's The Prince.

Lives includes a wealth of biographical information, and factual information about locations of works of art and practical matters regarding to artistic

techniques and practices of the epoch. In the first edition Michelangelo is the focus of Vasari's story. In the second edition of 1568 Vasari expanded the book to include a number of other living artists, and also Vasari's own autobiography.

In reading *Lives* it is not hard to imagine it as both an art history book and a travel brochure of sorts, meant to attract 16th and 17th century tourists, travellers and sightseers to visit the works of the artists he featured. It is also meant to highlight the patronage of the Medici, his entourage and compatriots.

It is remarkable that as you read excerpts from Vasari's *Lives* you are not stuck in a particular age, but are free to enjoy it within the context of our own. It is hard to know whether this is because of Vasari's writing style, or because of the timelessness of the art he is writing about: For, without question, the art of the Renaissance masters da Vinci and Michelangelo are themselves timeless …although the masters were mere mortals.

But Vasari describes artists like Michelangelo as mortal gods – he idolized his friend all his life – and we can agree that it is their art that make them such. The rest of his quote is now worth considering:

> *"What a happy age we live in! And how fortunate are our craftsmen, who have been given light and vision by Michelangelo and whose difficulties have been smoothed away by this marvellous and incomparable artist! The glory of his achievements has won them honour and renown; he has stripped away the bandage that kept their*

minds in the darkness and shown them how to distinguish truth from the falsehoods that clouded their understanding. You artists should thank heaven for what has happened and strive to imitate Michelangelo in everything you do."

Vasari was a contemporary and a personal friend of Michelangelo, and of those of consequence around Michelangelo. It is through these eyes that Giorgio Vasari sings the praises of his friend amongst the great artists.

If you have studied art history you may recognize some of the stories told by Vasari as they have been picked up by later writers. If you have not studied art history before, Vasari's *Lives* is a fine place to begin your education.

Notwithstanding the second hand nature of many of the stories, Vasari's *Lives* is the closest one can get to the genuine lives of several of the great Renaissance artists. It is also believed that Vasari was the first writer to put into print the term "Rinascita" or Renaissance –in doing so he defines his epoch. *Lives* is one of the most important Art History book ever written.

In Vasari's own words,

"It goes without saying that the arts must have been discovered by some one person; and I realize that someone made a beginning at some time. And of course it is possible for one man to have helped another, and to have taught and opened the way to design, colour, and relief; for I know that our art consists first and foremost in the imitation of nature but

then, since it cannot reach such heights unaided, in the imitation of the most accomplished artists."

When it comes to art, the term Culture is often heard but rarely understood. To cultivate means to prepare, to give attention to, or to promote.

Vasari's *Delle Vite de' piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, ed Architettori* is one of the finest examples of writing meant to cultivate an interest in the great artists of his age. In writing *Lives*, Vasari established a standard that was picked up by later art historians.

He also made a small fortune in return for his efforts, much greater than he achieved through his own painting and architecture. In middle age, living a now comfortable lifestyle, Vasari said to his less fortunate artist friends that:

"I was once poor like all of you and now I have three thousand scudi or more; you thought me foolish, but the monks and priests consider me to be a worthy man; I once served you and now I have this servant to wait upon me and take care of this horse; I once wore those rags that are worn by painters who are poor, and now I am clothed in velvet; I once went on foot and now I ride a horse: so … everything is going quite well; God be with you."

Up until the end of the 19th century Giorgio Vasari's *The Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects* remained one of the most widely

read art history books. In some sense, Vasari Lives put Florence and a handful of exceptional Renaissance artists on the map.

Pictorial: Come and tell me a story …

The Life of Leonardo da Vinci by Vasari

Florentine Painter and Sculptor, 1452 - 1519

In the normal course of events many men and women are born with various remarkable qualities and talents; but occasionally, in a way that transcends nature, a single person is marvellously endowed by heaven with beauty, grace, and talent in such abundance that he leaves other men far behind, all his actions seemed inspired, and indeed everything he does clearly comes from God rather than from human art.

Everyone acknowledged that this was true of Leonardo da Vinci, an artist of outstanding physical beauty who displayed infinite grace in everything he did and who cultivated his genius brilliantly that all problems he studied he solved with ease. He possessed great strength and dexterity; he was a man of regal spirit and tremendous breadth of mind; and his name became so famous that not only was he esteemed during his lifetime but his reputation endured and became even greater after his death.

This marvellously and divinely inspired Leonardo was the son of Piero da Vinci. He would have been very proficient at his early lessons if he had not been so volatile and unstable; for he was always setting himself to learn many things only to abandon them almost immediately. Thus he began to learn arithmetic, and after a few months he had made so much progress that he used to baffle his master with the questions and problems that he raised. For a while he attended to music and then he very soon resolved to learn to play the

lyre, for he was naturally an elevated and refined disposition; and with this instrument he accompanied his own charming improvised singing. All the same, for all his other enterprises Leonardo never ceased drawing and working in relief, pursuit which best suited his temperament.

Realizing this, and considering the quality of his son's intelligence, Piero one day took some of Leonardo's drawings along to Andrea del Verrocchio (who was a close friend of his) and earnestly begged him to say whether it would be profitable for the boy to study design. Andrea del Verrocchio, was a painter and goldsmith, and the chief sculptor in Florence after Donatello's death.

Andrea was amazed to see what extraordinary beginnings Leonardo had made and he urged Piero to make him study the subject. So Piero arranged for Leonardo to enter Andrea's workshop. The boy was delighted with this decision, and he began to practise not only one branch of the arts but all the branches in which design plays a part. He was marvellously gifted, and he proved himself to be a first-class geometrician in his work as a sculptor and architect. In his youth Leonardo made in clay several heads of women, and smiling faces, of which plaster casts are still being made, as well as some children's heads executed as if by a mature artist.

He also did many architectural drawings both of ground plans and of other elevations, and, while still young, he was the first to propose reducing the Arno to a navigable canal between Pisa and Florence. He made designs for mills, fulling machines, and engines that could be driven by water-power; and as he intended to be a painter by profession he carefully studied drawing from

life. Sometimes he made clay models, draping the figures with rags dipped in plaster, and then drawing them painstakingly on fine Rheims cloth or prepared linen. These drawings were done in black and white with the point of a brush, and the results were marvellous, as one can see from the examples of … *his* drawings. Besides this, Leonardo did beautiful and detailed drawings on paper which are unrivalled for their perfection and finish. Altogether, his genius was so wonderfully inspired by the grace of God, his powers of expression were so powerfully fed by a willing memory and intellect, and his writing conveyed his ideas so precisely, that his arguments and reasoning confounded the most formidable critics.

In addition, he used to make models and plans showing how to excavate and tunnel through mountains without difficulty, so as to pass from one level to another; and he demonstrated how to lift and draw great weights by means of levers, hoists, and winches, and ways of cleansing harbours and using pumps to suck up water from great depths.

His brain was always busy on such devices, and one can find drawings of his ideas and experiments scattered among our craftsman today; I myself have seen many of them. He also spent a great deal of time in making a pattern of a series of knots, so arranged that the connecting thread can be traced from one end to the other and the complete design fills a round space. There exists a splendid engraving of one of these fine and intricate designs, with these words in the centre: *Leonardus Vinci Academia*.

Among his models and plans there was one which Leonardo would often put before the citizens who were then governing Florence – many of these men of great discernment – showing how he proposed to raise and place steps under the church of San Giovanni without damaging the fabric. His arguments were so cogent that they would allow themselves to be convinced, although when they all went their several ways each of them would realize the impossibility of what Leonardo suggested.

Leonardo's disposition was so lovable that he commanded everyone's affection. He owned, one might say, nothing and he worked very little, yet he always kept servants as well as horses. They gave him great pleasure as indeed did all the animal creation which he treated with wonderful love and patience. For example, often when he was walking past the places where birds were sold he would pay the price asked, take them from their cage, and let them fly off into the air, giving them back their lost freedom. In return he was so favoured by nature that to whatever he turned his mind or thoughts the results were always inspired and perfect; and his lively and delightful works were incomparably graceful and realistic.

Clearly it was because of his profound knowledge of painting that Leonardo started so many things without finishing them; for he was convinced that his hands, for all their skill, could never perfectly express the subtle and wonderful ideas of his imagination. Among his many interests was included the study of nature; he investigated the properties of plants and then observed the motion of the heavens, the path of the moon, and the course of the sun.

I mentioned earlier that when he was still young Leonardo entered the workshop of Andrea del Verrocchio. Now at that time Verrocchio was working on a panel picture showing the baptism of Christ by St. John, for which Leonardo painted an angel who was holding some garments; and despite his youth, he executed it in such a manner that his angel was far better than the figures painted by Andrea. This was the reason why Andrea would never touch colours again, he was so ashamed that a boy understood their use better than he did.

The story goes that once when Piero da Vinci was at his house in the country one of the peasants on his farm, who had made himself a buckler (*a small shield*) out of a fig tree that he had cut down, asked him as a favour to have it painted for him in Florence, Piero was very happy to do this, since the man was very adept at snaring birds and fishing and Piero himself very often made use of him in these pursuits. He took the buckler to Florence, and without saying a word about whom it belonged to he asked Leonardo to paint something on it. Some days later Leonardo examined the buckler, and, finding that it was warped, badly made, and clumsy, he straightened it in the fire and gave it to a turner who, from the rough and clumsy thing that it was, made it smooth and even. Then having given it a coat of gesso and prepared it in his own way Leonardo started to think what he could paint on it so as to terrify anyone who saw it and produce the same effect as the head of Medusa.

To do what he wanted Leonardo carried into a room of his own, which no one ever entered except himself, a number of green and other kinds of lizards, crickets, serpents, butterflies, locusts, bats and various strange creatures of

this nature; from all these he took and assembled different parts to create a fearsome and horrible monster which emitted a poisonous breath and turned the air into fire. He depicted the creature emerging from the dark cleft of a rock, belching forth venom from its open throat, fire from its eyes and smoke from its nostrils inn so macabre a fashion that the effect was altogether monstrous and horrible. Leonardo took so long over his work that the stench of the dead animals in his room became unbearable, although he himself failed to notice because of his great love of painting. By the time he had finished the painting both the peasant and his father had stopped inquiring after it; but all the same he told his father that he could send for the buckler when convenient, since his work on it was completed.

So one morning Piero went along to the room in order to get the buckler, knocked at the door, and was told by Leonardo to wait for a moment. Leonardo went back into the room, put the buckler on an easel in the light, and shaded the window; then he asked Piero to come and see it. When his eyes fell on it Piero was completely taken by surprise and gave a sudden start, not realizing that he was looking at the buckler and that the form he saw was, in fact, painted on it. As he backed away, Leonardo checked him and said:

"This work certainly serves its purpose. It has produced the right reaction, so now you can take it away."

Piero thought the painting was indescribably marvellous and he was loud in praise of Leonardo's ingenuity. And then on the quiet he bought the pedlar another buckler, decorated with a heart pierced by a dart, and he gave this to

the peasant, who remained grateful to him for the rest of his days. Later on Piero secretly sold Leonardo's buckler to some merchants in Florence for a hundred ducats; and not long afterwards it came into the hands of the Duke of Milan, who paid those merchants three hundred ducats for it.

Leonardo then painted a Madonna, a very fine work which came into the possession of Pope Clement VII; one of the details in this picture was a vase of water containing some flowers, painted with wonderful realism, which he had on them dewdrops that looked more convincing than the real thing.

Leonardo then took it in mind to do a painting in oils showing the head of Medusa attired with a coil of serpents, the strangest and most extravagant invention imaginable. But this was a work that needed time, and so as with most of the things he did it was never finished. Today it is kept among the fine works of art in the palace of Duke Cosimo, along with the head of an angel raising one arm, which is foreshortened as it comes forward from the shoulder to the elbow, and lifting a hand to its breast with the other.

One of the remarkable aspects of Leonardo's talent was the extremes he went to, in his anxiety to achieve solidity of modelling, in the use of inky shadows. Thus to get the darkest possible grounds Leonardo selected blacks that made deeper shadows and were indeed blacker than any other, endeavouring to make his lights all the brighter by contrast. However, he eventually succeeded so well that his paintings were wholly devoid of light and subjects looked as if they were being seen in night rather than clearly defined by daylight. All

this came from his striving to obtain more relief and to bring his art to absolute perfection.

I most mention another habit of Leonardo's; he was always fascinated when he saw a man of striking appearance, with a strange head of hair or beard; and anyone who attracted him he would follow about all day long and end up seeing so clearly in his mind's eye that when he got home he could draw him as if he were standing there in the flesh. There are many drawings of both male and female heads which he did in this way …

Leonardo also started work on a panel picture showing the adoration of the Magi and containing a number of beautiful details, especially the heads; this painting, however, which was in the house of Amerigo Benci, opposite the Loggia de' Peruzzi, like so many of his works remained unfinished.

Meanwhile, in Milan, following the death of Duke Gian Galeazzo, Ludovico Sforza took over the state (in the year 1494) and did Leonardo the honour of inviting him to visit Milan so that he could hear him play the lyre, an instrument of which the new Duke was very fond (Leonardo probably went to Milan in 1482 when Ludovico was already in control of the state). Leonardo took with him a lyre that he had made himself, mostly of silver in the shape of a horse's head (a very strange and novel design) so that the sound could be more sonorous and resonant. Leonardo's performance was therefore superior to that of all the other musicians who had come to Ludovico's court. Leonardo was also the most talented improviser in verse of his time. Moreover, he was a sparkling conversationalist, and after they had spoken together the Duke

developed almost boundless love and admiration for his talents. He begged Leonardo to paint for him an altarpiece containing a Nativity, which he then sent to the Emperor.

Leonardo also executed in Milan, for the Dominicans of Santa Maria delle Grazie, a marvellous and beautiful painting of the Last Supper. Having depicted the heads of the apostles full of splendour and majesty, he deliberately left the head of Christ unfinished, convinced he would fail to give it the divine spirituality it demands. This all but finished work has ever since be held in the greatest veneration by the Milanese and others. In it Leonardo brilliantly succeeded in envisaging and reproducing the tormented anxiety of the apostles to know who had betrayed their master; so in their faces one can read the emotions of love, dismay, and anger, or rather sorrow, at their failure to grasp the meaning of Christ. And this excites no less admiration than the contrasted spectacle of the obstinacy, hatred and treachery in the face of Judas or, indeed, that the incredible diligence with which every detail of the work was executed. The texture of the very cloth on the table is counterfeited so cunningly that the linen itself could not look more realistic.

It is said that the Dominican Prior used to keep pressing Leonardo, in the most importunate way, to hurry up and finish the work, because he was puzzled by Leonardo's habit of sometimes spending half a day at a time contemplating what he had done so far; if the Prior had had his way, Leonardo would have toiled like one of the labourers hoeing in the garden and never put his brush down for a moment. Not satisfied with this, the Prior complained to the Duke, making such a fuss that the Duke was constrained to send for Leonardo and,

very tactfully, questioned him about the painting, although he showed perfectly well that he was only doing so because of the Priors' insistence. Leonardo, knowing he was dealing with a Prince of acute and discerning intelligence, was willing (as he never gad with the Prior) to explain his mind at length; and so he talked to the Duke for a long time about the art of painting. He explained that men of genius sometimes accomplish most when they work the least; for, he added, they are thinking out inventions and forming in their minds the perfect ideas which they subsequently express and reproduce with their hands.

Leonardo then said that he still had two heads to paint; the head of Christ was one, and for this he was unwilling to look for any human model, nor did he dare suppose that his imagination could conceive the beauty and divine grace that properly belonged to the incarnate Deity. Then, he said, he had yet to do the head of Judas, and this troubled him since he did not think he could imagine the features that would form the countenance of a man who, despite all the blessings he had been given could so cruelly steel his will to betray his own master and the creator of the world.

However, added Leonardo, he would try to find a model for Judas, and if he did not succeed in doing so, why then he was not without the head of the tactless and importunate Prior. The Duke roared with laughter at this and said that Leonardo had every reason in the world for saying so. The unfortunate Prior retired in confusion to worry the labourers working in his garden, and he left off worrying Leonardo, who skillfully finished the head of Judas and

made it seem the very embodiment of treachery and inhumanity. The head of Christ, remained, as was said, unfinished.

The noble painting was so finely composed and executed that the King of France subsequently wanted to remove it to his kingdom. He tried all he could to find architects to make the cross-stays of wood and iron with which the painting could be protected and brought safely to France, without any regard to expense, so great was his desire to have it. But as the painting was done on a wall his Majesty failed to have his way and it remained in the possession of the Milanese. While he was working on the Last Supper, in the same refectory where there is a painting of the Passion done in the old manner, on the end wall. Leonardo portrayed Ludovico himself with his eldest son, Massimiliano; and on the other side, with the Duchess Beatrice, his other son Francesco, both of whom later became Dukes of Milan; all of these figures are beautifully painted.

While he was engaged in this work Leonardo proposed to the Duke that he should make a huge equestrian statue in bronze as a memorial to his father; then he started and carried the work forward on such a scale that it was impossible to finish it. There have even been some to say (men's opinions are so various and, often enough, so envious and spiteful) that Leonardo had no intention of finishing it when he started. This is because it was so large that it proved an insoluble problem to cast it in one piece; and one can realize why, the outcome being what it was, many came to the conclusion they did, seeing that so many of his works remained unfinished. The truth, however, is surely that Leonardo's profound and discerning mind was so ambitious that it was

itself an impediment; and the reason he failed was because he endeavoured to add excellence to excellence and perfection to perfection. As our Petrarch has said, the desire outran the performance. In fact, those who saw the great clay model that Leonardo made considered that they had never seen a finer or more magnificent piece of work. It was preserved until the French came to Milan under King Louis and smashed it to pieces. Also lost is a little wax model which was held to be perfect, together with a reference book which Leonardo composed on the anatomy of horses. Leonardo then applied himself, even more assiduously, to the study of human anatomy, in which he collaborated with that excellent philosopher Marc Antonio della Torres, who was then lecturing at Pavia and who wrote on the subject. Della Torres, I have heard, was one of the first to illustrate the problems of medicine by the teachings of Galen and to throw true light on anatomy, which up until then had been obscured by the shadows of ignorance. In this he was wonderfully served by the intelligence, work, and the hand of Leonardo, who composed a book annotated in pen and ink in which he did meticulous drawings in red chalk of bodies he had dissected himself. He showed all the bone structure, adding in order all the nerves and covering them with the muscles: the first attached to the skeleton, the second that hold it firm and the third that move it. In the various sections he wrote his observations in puzzling characters (written in reverse with the left hand) which cannot be deciphered by anyone who does not know the trick of reading them in a mirror.

Many of Leonardo's manuscripts on human anatomy are in the possession of Francesco Melzi, a Milanese gentleman who was a handsome boy when Leonardo was alive and who was greatly loved by him. Francesco cherishes

and preserves these papers as relics of Leonardo, together with the portrait of that artist of such happy memory. Reading Leonardo's writings one is astonished at the brilliant way in which this inspired artist discussed so thoroughly art and anatomy (the muscles, nerves, and veins) and indeed every subject.

Then Leonardo went back to Florence where he found that the Servite Friars had commissioned Filippino to paint the altar piece for the high altar of the Annunziata. Leonardo remarked that he would gladly have undertaken the work himself, and when he heard this, like the good-hearted person he was Fillippino decided to withdraw. Then the Friars, to secure Leonardo's services, took him into their house and met all his expenses and those of his household. He kept them waiting a long time without even starting anything, and then he finally did a cartoon showing Our Lady with St. Anne and the Infant Jesus. This work not only won the astonished admiration of all the artists but when finished for two days it attracted to the room where it was been exhibited a crowd of men and women, young and old, who flocked there, as if they were attending a great festival, to gaze in amazement as the marvels he had created. For in the face of Our Lady are seen all the simplicity and loveliness and grace that can be conferred on the mother of Christ, since Leonardo wanted to show the humility and the modesty appropriate to an image of the Virgin who is overflowing with joy at seeing the beauty of her Son. She is holding him tenderly in her lap, and she lets her pure gaze fall on St. John, who is depicted as a little boy playing with a lamb; and this is not without a smile from St. Anne, who is supremely joyful as she contemplates the divinity of her earthly progeny. These ideas were truly worthy of

Leonardo's intellect and genius. As I shall describe, this cartoon was subsequently taken to France.

Leonardo also did a portrait if Ginerva, the wife of Amerigo Benci, a very beautiful painting. He abandoned the work he was doing for the Friars and they went back to Filippino, who, however, died before he could finish it.

For Francesco del Giocondo Leonardo undertook to execute the portrait of his wife, Mona Lisa. He worked on this painting for four years, and then left it unfinished; and today it is in the possession of King Francis of France, at Fontainbleau. If one wanted to see how faithfully art can imitate nature, one could readily perceive it from his head; for here Leonardo subtly reproduced every living detail. The eyes had their natural lustre and moistness, and around them were the lashes and all those rosy and pearly tints that demand the greatest delicacy of execution. The eyebrows were completely natural, growing thickly in one place and lightly in another and following the pores of the skin. The nose was finely painted, with rosy and delicate nostrils as in life. The mouth, joined to the flesh-tints of the face by the red of the lips, appeared to be living flesh rather than paint. On looking closely at the pit of her throat one could swear that the pulses were beating. Altogether this picture was painted in a manner to make the most confident artist – no matter who – despair and lose heart. Leonardo also made use of this device: while he was painting Mona Lisa, who was a very beautiful woman, he employed singers and musicians and jesters to keep her full of merriment and so chase away the melancholy that painters usually give to portraits. As a result, in this painting of Leonardo's there was a smile so pleasing that it seemed divine

rather than human; and those who saw it were amazed to find that it was as alive as the original.

The great achievements of this inspired artist so increased his prestige that everyone who loved art, or rather every single person in Florence, was anxious for him to leave the city some memorial; and so it was proposed everywhere that Leonardo should be commissioned to do some great and notable work which would enable the state to be honoured and adorned by his discerning talent, grace and judgment. As it happened the Great Hall of the Council was being constructed under the architectural direction of Giuliano Sangello, Simone Pollaiuolo (known as Cronaca), Michel Angelo Buonarroti, and Baccio d' Angnolo, as I shall relate at greater length in the right place. It was finished in a hurry, and after the head of the government and the chief citizens had conferred together, it was publicly announced that a splendid painting would be commissioned from Leonardo. And then he was asked by Piero Soderini, the Gonfalonier of Justice, to do a decorative painting for the Council Hall. As a start, therefore, Leonardo began work in the Hall of the Pope, in Santa Maria Novella, on a cartoon illustrating an incident in the life of Niccolo Piccinino, a commander of the Duke Filippo of Milan. He showed a group of horsemen fighting for a standard, in a drawing which was regarded as very fine and successful because of the wonderful ideas he expressed in his interpretation of the battle. In the drawing, rage, fury, and vindictiveness are displayed both by the men and by the horses, two of which with their forelegs interlocked are battling with their teeth no less fiercely than their riders are struggling for the standard.

It is impossible to convey the fine draughtsmanship with which Leonardo depicted the soldier's costumes, with their distinctive variations, or the helmet-crests and the other ornaments, not to speak of the incredible mastery that he displayed in the forms and lineaments of the horses which, with their bold spirit and muscles and shapely beauty, Leonardo portrayed better than any other artist. It is said that to draw the cartoon Leonardo constructed an ingenious scaffolding that he could raise or lower by drawing it together or extending it. He also conceived the wish to paint the picture in oils, but to do this he mixed such a thick composition for laying on the wall that, as he continued his painting in the hall, it started to run and spoil what he had done. So shortly afterwards he abandoned the work.

Leonardo went to Rome with Duke Giuliano de' Medici on the election of Pope Leo who was a great student of natural philosophy, and especially of alchemy. And in Rome he experimented with a paste made of a certain kind of wax made some light and billowing figures in the form of animals which he inflated with his mouth and as he walked along and which flew above the ground until all the air (*vento*) had escaped.

To the back of a very odd-looking lizard that was found by the gardener of the Belvedere he attached with a mixture of quicksilver some wings, made from scales stripped from other lizards, which quivered as it walked along. Then, after he had given it eyes, horns and a beard he tamed the creature, and keeping it in a box he used to show it to his friends and frighten the life out of them.

Again, Leonardo used to get intestines of a bullock scraped completely free of their fat, cleaned and made so fin that they could be compressed into the palm of one hand; then he would fix one end of them to a pair of bellows lying in another room, and when they were inflated they filled the room in which they were and forced anyone standing there into a corner. Thus he could expand this translucent and airy stuff to fill a large space after occupying only a little, and he compared it to genius – to *virtù* (virtue). He perpetrated hundreds of follies of this kind, and he also experimented with mirrors and made the most outlandish experiments to discover oils for painting and varnish for preserving the finished works.

Once when he was commissioned a work by the Pope, Leonardo is said to have started at once to distil oils and various plants in order to prepare the varnish; and the Pope is supposed to have exclaimed: "Oh, dear, this man will never do anything. Here he is thinking about finishing the work before he even starts it!"

Leonardo and Michel Angelo strongly disliked each other, and so Michel Angelo left Florence because of their rivalry (with permission of the Duke Giuliano) after he had been summoned by the Pope to discuss the completion of the façade of San Lorenzo; and when he heard this Leonardo also left Florence and went to France. The king had obtained several of his works and was very devoted to him, and he asked Leonardo to paint the cartoon of St. Anne. But, characteristically, Leonardo for a long time put him off with mere words.

Finally, in his old age Leonardo lay sick for several months, and feeling that he was near to death in earnestly resolved to learn about the doctrines of the Catholic faith and of the good and holy Christian religion. Then, lamenting bitterly, he confessed and repented, and, although he could not stand up, supported by his friends and servants he received the Blessed Sacrament from his bed. He was joined by the king, who often used to pay him affectionate visits, and having respectfully raised himself in his bed he told the king about his illness and what had caused it, and he protested that he had offended God and mankind by not working at his art as he should have done. Then he was seized by a paroxysm, the forerunner of death, and. To show him favour and to soothe his pain, the king held his head. Conscious of the great honour being done to him, the inspired Leonardo breathed his last in the arms of the king; he was then *sixty-seven* years old. All who had known Leonardo was grieved beyond words by his loss, for no one had ever shed such lustre on the art of painting.

In appearance he was striking and handsome, and his magnificent presence brought comfort to the most troubled souls; he was so persuasive that he could bend other people to his own will. He was physically so strong that he could withstand any violence; with his right hand he would bend the iron ring of a doorbell or a horseshoe as if they were lead. He was so generous that he sheltered and fed all his friends, rich or poor, provided they were o some talent or worth. By his every action Leonardo adorned and honored the meanest and humblest dwelling-place. Through his birth, therefore, Florence received a great gift, and through his death it sustained an incalculable loss. In painting he brought to the technique of colouring oils a way of darkening the shadows

which has enabled modern painters to give vigour and relief to their figures. He showed his powers as a sculptor in the three bronze figures over the north door of San Giovanni which were executed by Giovanfrancesco Rustici, under Leonardo's direction, and which as far as design and finish are concerned are the finest casts yet seen in modern times.

Because of Leonardo we have a deeper knowledge of human anatomy and the anatomy of the horse. And because of his wonderful gifts (although he accomplished far more in words than in deeds) his name and fame will never be extinguished.

Poetry

Kubla Khan by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round

And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossom'd many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But O, that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething.
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced;
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:

And ’mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reach’d the caverns measureless to man.
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And ’mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she play’d,
Singing of Mount Abora.

Could I revive within me,
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight ’twould win me,
That with music loud and long,

I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Pictorial: Do you like my flowers?

The Pilgrim by John Bunyan

Who w'ould true valour see,
Let him come hither;
One here wall constant be,
Gome wind, come weather.
There’s no discouragement
Shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent
To be a Pilgrim.

Who so beset him round
With dismal stories
Do but themselves confound;
His strength the more is.
No lion can him fright,
But he will have a right
To be a Pilgrim.

Hobgoblin nor foul fiend
Gan daunt his spirit:
He knows he at the end
Shall life inherit.
Then fancies fly away,
He’ll fear not what men say,
He’ll labour night and day

To be a Pilgrim.

The Clod and the Pebble by William Blake

‘Love seeketh not Itself to please,
Nor for Itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell’s despair.’

So sung a little Clod of Clay
Trodden with the cattle’s feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

‘Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to ts delight,
Joys in another’s loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven’s despite.’

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Pictorial: Can you guess who this is?

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